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THE  
WORLD OF MUSIC  
BY A. COLEMAN

PAUL COLE  
ON THE WORLD OF MUSIC

WITH AN AFTERWORD BY COLEMAN



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# THE GROWTH OF MUSIC

## A STUDY IN MUSICAL HISTORY FOR SCHOOLS

BY  
H. C. COLLES

PART III  
IDEALS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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## A NOTE TO TEACHERS

IN offering the third volume, which for the present at any rate may be considered as the completion of this series, there is not much to be added to what was said under this heading at the beginning of the preceding volumes. As far as possible, I have kept to the method adopted in Parts I and II of *The Growth of Music*, but two variations have been imposed by the nature of the material. This volume is less chronological than the first, less technical than the second. The reasons will be obvious. The great composers of the nineteenth century consist practically of two generations : those born in or about the first decade of the century, and those born in and about the fourth and fifth. But here we get a cross division, for while some members of the first generation, such as Mendelssohn and Chopin, completed their work and died about the middle of the century, others, such as Berlioz and Wagner, only began to exert their greatest influence in the latter half of the century, and so appear as the artistic contemporaries of the younger generation. This complicates the task of the chronicler to some extent, but does not much affect that of the student. For the fact is that the majority of the leading musical spirits of the last century were only incidentally affected by their contemporaries. Antipathies were more apparent than affinities, and it is often only when their courses have been traced independently that we can discover the underlying affinity, such as that which undoubtedly exists between the melody of Brahms and Wagner. The plan, therefore, has been to follow out the development of a particular form of art through the century, and that has entailed returning upon the tracks in point of time more than once.

The aim has also been to give as distinct a picture as possible of the place taken by the greatest men in the development of the art as a whole, and for this a suggestion of their characters

as artists has been more important than their various uses of technique. It is necessary, however, to emphasize the importance of reading this volume in conjunction with its predecessors, particularly Part II. For example, the chapter on 'Instruments' (Part II, Chapter II) should be placed beside that on 'The Orchestra and Berlioz' (Part III, Chapter III); 'Sonata Form' and 'Quartet and Symphony' (Part II, Chapters IV and V) give the technical basis from which 'Chamber Music and the Symphony' (Part III, Chapter VI) proceeds, and 'Music, Words, and Drama' (Part II, Chapter VI) is a necessary preliminary to 'Wagner and the Opera' (Part III, Chapter V).

The sectional headings and the cross references will facilitate this kind of treatment both with regard to the several subjects of this volume and corresponding features of the earlier ones.

It is impossible to insist too strongly upon the importance of studying musical history through the hearing of music itself, and since the facilities for hearing the music of the nineteenth century are so much greater than those of hearing older music that part of study is very much simplified at this stage. But while it is possible for students to hear at concerts practically all the music discussed in this volume, teachers should not rely only on concert performances for the practical illustration of their lessons. The same method of illustration in class advocated in the earlier volumes should be pursued in studying this one. With those chapters which deal with song and with piano music there can be little difficulty in securing this, and orchestral music can be studied largely through piano arrangements. On this point I would refer teachers to the remarks contained in the Notes at the beginning of Parts I and II.

It will be noticed that this volume stops short of any detailed discussion of composers now living, but that an exception has been made in the last chapter, which touches briefly upon the music of this country. It is remarkable that in practically every continental country those composers who made their influence strongly felt during the nineteenth century died before that century closed. In England, however, the end of the century did not form the end of an artistic period in that way. The

position is analogous to what took place at the junction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Palestrina dying at the end of the sixteenth century left Monteverde to become the commanding force early in the seventeenth, but in England the period of contrapuntal music was extended well into the seventeenth century. Similarly, to-day the English revival of which Parry, Stanford, and Elgar are typical is so much the outcome of the nineteenth century that it would be impossible to close a volume on that period without allusion to their work.

Moreover, if as one hopes there is a strong period of musical creation before us in this country, it is of first-rate importance that the rising generation should grow up with a knowledge of what has been done already. At the present day we hear too much talk about British music and have too little historical knowledge of it. We are perpetually introduced to new works, but our knowledge of what was written by our countrymen, fifty, twenty, or even ten years ago remains lamentably hazy. For these reasons the last chapter of this book is short and aims solely at giving a few hints towards practical study.

One new feature is added to the lists of possible illustrations at the end of each chapter. The names of a few books on the special aspects of the art discussed in the chapter are added, so that teachers and senior students may have a ready means of pursuing the subject more deeply. Only books in the English language are included, and the list does not pretend to be exhaustive. It is in fact, like the ideas expressed in the following pages, merely a personal suggestion.

H. C. COLLES.

HAMPSTEAD, 1916.



## CHAPTER I

### NEW PATHS

To make a list of the ten greatest musical geniuses of the nineteenth century might not be quite easy. A committee of musicians who sat down to compile one would probably agree perfectly in voting for seven or eight, and quarrel desperately over the remaining two or three names. If they were asked to put their list in an order of precedence, the greatest man at the top, the second greatest next to him, and so on, the quarrel would begin much earlier ; probably the first place would be hotly disputed, and terrible things would happen when the delicate question of placing the tail members of the team came up for decision.

For the fact is that genius being distinguished by an extraordinarily large number of different qualities is immeasurable and incomparable. A tiny prelude of a few bars long may be worth more to the world than a symphony in four movements for full orchestra ; while, on the other hand, a song which is flawless in its expression of a lyric verse may yet be classed below an opera weighted down with passages of uninspired music but which rises to supreme moments of splendour at the great crises of the drama. Ben Jonson said, 'In short measures life may perfect be'. Art too may be perfect in the shortest of measures, and, since there are no degrees of perfection, once we have said that a thing is perfect there is no comparing it with anything else. But short of perfection, and of course there are bound to be very few works of art of which the term can be rightly used, the measurement of effort is confusing in the extreme. The man who has a big thing to say and fails to get it said with absolute precision may yet have done far more than the man who left us some small thoughts expressed

in forms of transparent clearness. We cannot measure these things against one another with any accuracy, and fortunately we are not called upon to try.

Our main business here is to understand some of the chief ways in which the great geniuses of the nineteenth century used their inheritance from the past, and carried on and amplified musical expression so as to leave a richer inheritance to us of the twentieth century. With this in view we must draw distinctions. We shall see Mendelssohn ranging brilliantly over every conceivable type of composition for instruments and voices, while Chopin sits at his piano and scarcely thinks apart from its keyboard. We shall see too that one man's meat is another's poison ; that Brahms could no more compose an opera than Wagner could concern himself with a string quartet. We shall come upon instances where even great men mistook their vocation, attempted what for them was impossible, or were for the moment misled into accepting the second best from themselves. And to draw such distinctions will help our understanding if we always remember that we are studying them as great men and not as little men, and never fall into the fatal mistake of measuring their works by their faults.

We will not begin then with a list of the ten greatest geniuses of the nineteenth century, but we will begin by trying to make a list of ten men who have had the greatest influence upon the art of music as a whole in the nineteenth century. That is a different thing. The list will necessarily be made up of great geniuses, but not necessarily in every case of the greatest. For there have been some whose circumstances in life prevented them from reaching any position of commanding influence in the world of art, or whose art was of so personal a kind that for the time being at any rate it was passed over by their contemporaries, and whose supreme importance has scarcely yet been realized.

We will put our list in the form of a table, and name the ten men according to the dates of their birth. Also, for a reason which will appear later on, we will give not only the birthplace of each but the 'life-place', that is, the place in which each

lived for the greater part of his life, or which for one reason or another became the chief centre of his influence.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Dates.</i>	<i>Birthplace.</i>	<i>Life-place.</i>
Franz Schubert . .	1797-1828	Vienna . . . .	Vienna.
Hector Berlioz . .	1803-1869	Grenoble (France) . .	Paris.
Felix Mendelssohn . .	1809-1847	Hamburg . . . .	Leipzig.
Frédéric Chopin . .	1810-1849	Zelazowa Wola (Poland) .	Paris.
Robert Schumann . .	1810-1856	Zwickau (Saxony) . .	Leipzig.
Franz Liszt . . .	1811-1886	Raiding (Hungary) . .	Weimar.
Richard Wagner . .	1813-1883	Leipzig . . . .	Bayreuth.
César Franck . .	1822-1890	Liège (Belgium) . .	Paris.
Johannes Brahms . .	1833-1897	Hamburg . . . .	Vienna.
Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky	1840-1893	Kamsko Votinsk (Russia)	Moscow.

This list includes, broadly speaking, representatives of all the biggest movements which have taken place in the art of music during the century. It might be extended a little but not very far without leading us from the highways into the byways, and as we shall have our work cut out to explore even the main roads of music we will not be tempted by even the most fascinating of side-tracks at the outset. Learn this table then by heart, but learn it not parrot-wise but with intelligence.

Every one of these ten men, save Schubert, was born and died in the course of the nineteenth century. Schubert, born just before the turn of the century, was a younger contemporary of Beethoven in Vienna and only survived him by one year. But note that again the geographical centres of action change (see Part II, p. 35). After the death of Schubert, Vienna, the home of the symphony, only once reappears much later, and then as the adopted city of Brahms. Paris still is the stage of great actions as she was in the time of Gluck, but she is not the birthplace of the great composers. Berlioz is the only French-born member of the group; Chopin, a Pole, and Franck, a Belgian, however, were both drawn to Paris, and we shall find that the many-sided life of Paris had the strongest influence upon several others.

The preponderance of Germans among the big musical figures of the nineteenth century is of course obvious. Of the two who

hailed from Hamburg—Mendelssohn and Brahms—one was a Jew, the other a Teuton. The likeness of Brahms's name to 'Abrahams' often made people imagine him to be Jewish, much to his annoyance. The two other Germans, Schumann and Wagner, were natives of Saxony, and it is worth observing that Prussia, and its capital Berlin, contributed nothing whatever of importance to the development of the art of music.

Indeed, ever since the time of Frederick the Great, Prussian attempts to organize music have been steadily resisted by the great men. J. S. Bach could scarcely be persuaded to visit Potsdam, and the one visit of his old age, the merest visit of ceremony, is memorable because it is exceptional (see Part I, p. 100). Mozart was tempted to settle in Berlin by the most generous offers of royal support at a time when he sorely needed material comfort, but he turned his back upon the offer (see Part II, p. 53). Mendelssohn was actually lured into accepting an appointment there; he hated Berlin as an artistic centre though his family's home was there (see p. 84), and its worries shortened his life. The world of music has nothing for which to thank Prussia.

The riches which Germany has brought to it are the products of Saxony, Thuringia, Hanover, and the Rhine provinces (see map at the end of Part I), and amongst these Leipzig was the richest treasure-house, as it had been in the time of Bach, until Wagner created his new home among the Bavarian woods at Bayreuth.

Liszt and Tchaikovsky stand apart from the others of our group of ten names. The former was Hungarian by birth, but his early career as one of the greatest pianists, possibly the greatest who ever lived, made him more truly a citizen of the world than any of the others, and while he is the only one amongst them whose greatness as a composer may be questioned, his influence as a foster-parent of music was one of the strongest during the century. He must take a high place in a list of music's strong men, though he might not appear at all in one of the greatest composers. Weimar may be named as his 'life-place', for it was there that as musical director he exerted himself most actively in furthering every young musical enterprise, and in particular performed the works of Wagner.

Tchaikovsky, on the other hand, brings in an entirely new point of view. Russia was outside the pale of European music until almost the middle of this century. Musicians might travel to it; they hardly expected music to come from it. Petrograd and London were expected to supply applause, nothing more. Both are showing now that they have a more solid contribution to offer. Tchaikovsky was far from being the first among Russian composers, but he was the first to impress the world with the sense that Russia had really 'grown up', and that was one of the biggest events in the musical history of the nineteenth century.

#### A CHANGED OUTLOOK

The growing up to a sense of national independence does not only appear in Russia; it is one of the strongest and most widespread contrasts which the music of the nineteenth century presents to that of the eighteenth. The famous 'Guerre des Bouffons' in Paris (see Part II, p. 126) was primarily a question of the French language versus the Italian language, and the greatest champion of the national party was Gluck, a foreigner. Haydn, though his whole mind was saturated with the peasant songs of his native Croatia (see Part II, p. 36), had never a thought of creating a national school of musical composition.

But in the nineteenth century the musical minds, especially those who sprang from the smaller nations, were not content merely to become tributaries to the broad stream of the world's music. Chopin, though he lived in Paris, founded his most exquisite art upon the dance rhythms of his own Poland; Smetana headed a movement in Prague for the establishment of Bohemian music, a movement which came to fruition in the music of Dvořák; Grieg turned to the folk-songs of Norway, and their scales, intervals, and rhythms give a distinguishing character to his music. 'All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full'; all these and other separate national types of music become in time the possessions of the whole world; the composers do not write for their own countrymen alone, but they gather strength and beauty from the life immediately around them, to which they belong and which they love. And the conscious effort to do this on the

part of so many different composers has been chiefly the result of a changed attitude of mind towards music. The older composers were children of nature; they followed an instinct which compelled them to make beautiful things in sound. They did not inquire deeply why they followed it; they did not argue about it or try to say in words what they meant by it, but it was the thing they lived for, and since they gave their lives for it they expected it to bring them a living. Gluck alone amongst them expounded critical theories (see Part II, p. 124), and they were with regard to opera more than pure music. But in the new century we find one man after another expounding his views. Music and music only is sufficient for very few of them. Berlioz gives a literary interpretation of one big work after another; Schumann starts a newspaper for the discussion of musical questions; Wagner pours out pamphlet after pamphlet to explain himself and 'the music of the future'. Certainly a big change has come. What is it?

We have already hinted at it (Part II, pp. 148-153) in studying the life of Beethoven, and with it we come now to the beginning of our story. That sense of personal responsibility which took complete possession of Beethoven was set deep in the whole social and political life of Europe as it emerged from the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars. The old life of state and ceremony, even where it was not outwardly destroyed as it had been in France, was visibly shaken. It might suit many nations to preserve its outward features, but there was no longer any faith either in the divine right of kings or of institutions. Men were never so ready to think freely; there have been rarely so many individuals ready to clothe the thoughts of men in literature and poetry. For with the growth of what we described as the 'inventive genius' of the nineteenth century, the genius which linked all the countries of Europe with railroads and drew a web of steam routes across the seas, the genius which made men question the truth of every established power, from the church to the principles of science, there sprang up also a great love of the world, its wonders and its beauties, a curiosity as to the past and a desire to rediscover the world of the past and the

spirit which animated its people. The romantic literature of France with Victor Hugo at its head, the dramatic and lyric poetry of Germany captained by Goethe and Schiller, our own poets from Wordsworth and Byron to Shelley and Swinburne, are so many expressions of different aspects of this spirit. Was music to stand aside from all this life and remain self-sufficient, at best the symbol of one soul's aspiration, at worst an entertainment for fools? That was the question which the makers of music had to face.

#### THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Leaving Beethoven out of count for the moment, let us see who were the commanding figures in music at the turn of the century, and how far they were capable of throwing themselves into this new life. Cherubini (see Part II, p. 134) was the leader of music in Paris. He had already reached middle life, a man of profound musical cultivation, trained in a severe school and taking a severe view of his art, the last man to become the discoverer of new paths. His conservatism was no doubt one cause of the disfavour with which Napoleon regarded him.

A group of composers of opera, all superficial and all bent primarily on providing effective entertainments, surrounded and followed Cherubini in Paris. Scarcely anything of real greatness seemed likely to come out of Italy, though among the men born at about this time were several whose names it is impossible to forget. There is Spontini (1774-1851), who in 1808 began to overawe Europe with the solemn pretentiousness of his opera *La Vestale*, and who went on impressing Europe and himself by the immensity of his scores for half a century. Another operatic idol, a little younger, was Rossini (1792-1868), a very different kind of man from Spontini. He possessed a sense of humour, rare among musicians, which he could turn against himself as readily as against any one else. Such humour would have seemed profane to Spontini; but it has helped to keep alive some of Rossini's works, *Il Barbiere*, for example, though all Spontini's are dead. But another characteristic of Rossini's music, which keeps it alive in the sense of gaining it per-

formances, is its vocal showiness. Spontini was too serious-minded to fill up every air with the *coloratur* passages which delight the heart of every *prima donna* in *Il Barbiere*. Showing off the voice was really the be-all and end-all of Italian opera at this time. Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini might do it in different ways, might display humour or skill or grace of melody if they chose, but they had to do it. They were the servants of the singer as completely as though Gluck had never issued his famous protest (see Part II, p. 124), and on the whole they were very well content with their servitude.

Among the German-speaking peoples, however, there was a newer and truer influence at work, and as with so many of the big men who occupied our attention in the previous part of our study, we have to turn to Austria for its origin. We spoke of the Emperor's attempt to found German opera in Vienna, and of Mozart's contribution to it (see Part II, pp. 116 and 138).

The man who was to go further and found a type of opera which was not only German in language but expressive in a large degree of the new artistic aspirations came of an Austrian family of musicians, though it happened that he was born in the extreme north of Germany.

#### WEBER AND OPERA

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826) was a cousin of Mozart's wife (see Part II, pp. 47 and 50). His father, like the other members of the family, was a musician, and for some time during Carl Maria's childhood a theatrical manager.

The father was as ambitious for his son to become a musician as Mozart's father had been, but he had even less understanding of what real greatness in music means. He would have been well content if the boy had shown aptitude for the career of a performing pianist, and was disappointed by his lack of readiness to astonish the multitudes at an early age. He did the best thing possible, however, when he placed his son at the age of twelve years under the tuition of Michael Haydn (see Part II, p. 36) at Salzburg. But Weber had other masters, both regular and irregular, worthy members of the musical

profession like Heuschkel, who first gave him the foundations of his piano technique, and friends in many grades of life from the Court to the theatre, from whom perhaps he learnt more than from his regular teachers. His friendship with the Abbé Vogler was an important episode in his life when as a very young man he was most alive to new impressions. The name of Vogler is now kept alive for English people chiefly by Robert Browning's poem in *Dramatis Personae*. But Browning's picture of the idealist musing over the organ keys is hardly one of the actual man. Vogler was one of those strange mixtures of worldly vanity and piety, of charlatanry and true art, which appear from time to time and of which Liszt is a more recent example. Mozart, who met Vogler in Mannheim, was repelled by him ; Weber was fascinated by him and had thoughts of writing his life. The very mixture of qualities and the variety of tastes, ambitions and abilities, which Mozart was inclined to despise in Vogler, attracted Weber, for to Mozart music was life ; to Weber it was a part of life, and life was becoming full of many interests.

If Weber had had only artistic talent and not genius he would probably have dabbled in one kind of artistic activity after another and achieved nothing permanent. He used his pen for other things than music ; he attempted a novel, wrote criticism, and even thought of starting a musical paper such as Schumann actually founded later (see p. 78). In all this one sees the symptoms of the new spirit of the age at work. For three years (1807-10) he was engaged as secretary to the brother of the King of Würtemberg and lived at Stuttgart, but he got into trouble there over some transactions of business, and though his character was cleared he was banished from the kingdom. The event, however, had a steadyng effect upon him. It was impossible any longer to drift, to be content with the momentary successes of concert-giving. It was necessary, as he himself said of his work, though in another connexion, to make 'every stroke tell'. He had already written much music for the theatre and the orchestra, including two symphonies. But all the strokes which tell come after his years at Stuttgart. The concertos, the piano sonatas,

the majority of the songs are among them. For a short time he was Kapellmeister, that is, conductor of the opera, at Prague, and carried out a thorough re-organization of the theatre; then he moved to a similar post at Dresden, a post which he held until his death and in which at a later date Wagner followed him (see p. 107), and here he began to compose *Der Freischütz* (The Marksman), which was to be his master-stroke. The fact that when *Der Freischütz* was performed for the first time in Berlin in 1821 it was immediately an overwhelming success shows how thoroughly Weber was a part of the spirit of his time and his people. It was precisely what his audience were ripe for, a simple story based upon an old folk-legend and expressed quite naturally in melody. There is here neither the real classical grandeur of Gluck nor the pseudo-classical pomp of Spontini. There is none of the subtle interweaving of events and characters of Mozart's comedies (see Part II, pp. 135-6), but there is also none of the vapid vocal display of contemporary Italian opera. Listen to the scena in which the heroine (Agathe), waiting for the coming of her lover, looks out into the night and dreams and prays in the moonlight. She hears him coming, and the scene ends with their joyful meeting. It is a piece of sentiment, sweet and clean and fresh, and in 1821 even the people of Berlin could appreciate that. No one with any simplicity of heart can fail to love the tune 'Leise, leise', or to appreciate the apt phrases of recitative which contrast with it, and the ecstatic tune 'All' meine Pulse schlagen' with its continual groups of quavers in pairs, which makes the happiest of endings.

Weber's life, however, was cut short. He made a beginning which others were to build upon. Another and a more ambitious opera followed, *Euryanthe*, and then he received the invitation from Charles Kemble, the famous English actor, to produce an opera in English at Covent Garden. The result was his visit here in 1826, the composition of his last opera, *Oberon*, its enthusiastic welcome by the English audience, and his death from tuberculosis almost immediately afterwards in the house of Sir George Smart.

Much of Weber's music was so direct an appeal to his own generation that it has lost its force for later generations. It was a powerful inspiration to some of his immediate successors, especially Wagner and Berlioz, and his ideas about opera, as well as his wonderfully imaginative writing for the orchestra, must be studied in connexion with them. But when one considers him beside Beethoven, who died in the following year, one sees why Weber's influence was strongest immediately after his death and Beethoven's went on growing until it became most powerful among the great masters of the latter part of the century.

#### BEETHOVEN'S LAST WORKS

For Beethoven in the last years of his life was isolated from the outer world about him in spite of the fact that it was he who, catching the first breaths of the new air, opened up fresh possibilities to the musicians of the nineteenth century. If you study or analyse any of the last piano sonatas or the last string quartets you realize that there is pervading them a profound dissatisfaction with every established form and every conventional ornament acceptable in the music of the eighteenth century. He discards the charm of carefully balanced chords and harmonic effects; moods of turbulent energy and serene calm succeed one another abruptly; in the piano music the hands are often spread to the two ends of the keyboard in order to make a gigantic sweep of melody over notes which have the least possible amount of resonance in combination. The following from the last movement of the sonata Op. 111 is typical:

Ex. 1. *tr.*

*p*      *cres.*      *sf*

B 2

## NEW PATHS



The same sonata, and particularly its first movement, supplies complete examples of all these characteristics of Beethoven's later music which made it uncongenial to his contemporaries. His friends were repelled by it; some who had been his most ardent admirers thought these last sonatas crude, and the string quartets with their many short movements, their impulsive changes of expression and their often thin harmonies, seemed to them vague, disjointed, and unfinished. Some even had the impudence to ask him to compose music in his earlier style, as though he were a tradesman whose business it was to supply goods according to sample. Even musicians like Weber, who fully felt the force of Beethoven's genius, were repelled by these things.

Apart from the actual style of the music there are various signs that the last quartets of Beethoven were closely bound up with the tragic experiences of his life. At the head of the *adagio* of the quartet in A minor he wrote, 'Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart' (Sacred song of thanksgiving to the Deity of one restored to health, in the Lydian mode), and this is succeeded by an *andante* above which he wrote, 'Neue Kraft fühlend' (feeling new strength). The two are combined, and a final variation of the Lydian melody is marked in every part 'mit innigster Empfindung' (with the most intimate expression). Sir George Smart visited Beethoven in 1825 and happened to come in for the first private performance of this quartet. He refers to it in his diary. 'Beethoven intended to allude to himself, I suppose, for he was very ill during the early part of this year.' The

laconic 'I suppose' well indicates the amount of real sympathy which could be looked for from one who was without doubt a cultivated musician, and who had come to Vienna with the special object of learning Beethoven's wishes with regard to the Ninth Symphony, which he had already conducted for the London Philharmonic Society.

Beethoven's association not only of states of feeling but of verbal phrases embodying them with his music is shown in the F major quartet, Op. 135, where the theme of the last movement is preceded by the following, written neither for instrument nor voice, but as a motto :

Ex. 2. *Grave.*

*Allegro.*

Muss es sein?  
Must it be?

Es muss sein!  
It must be!

The question and its inexorable answer pervade the whole movement.

But the most famous instance of the link between the melodic idea and a verbal one comes, of course, in the introduction to the finale of the choral symphony (see Part II, p. 61), where the violoncellos and double basses struggle to drive away the purely instrumental melodies of the earlier movements with their almost vocal recitative, the meaning of which is ultimately made clear by the entrance of the bass voice calling the multitudes to the paean of joy.

Ex. 3. (a)

V'C AND C.B.

(b)

O Freunde . . . . .

de, nicht die - - - se Tö - ne!  
not these . . . . notes!

The whole of this passage, and indeed his final adoption of Schiller's ode to complete his colossal symphony, a decision arrived at after many trials of other material, is conclusive evidence of Beethoven's will to throw in his lot with the forces of the new era. 'Seid umschlungen, Millionen! diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!' It is blazed out in a mighty phrase. Wagner hailed it as the first-fruits of 'the art of the future', always interpreting that expression to mean the fulfilment of his own ideas. But he was right in a larger sense. Sensitive musicians have recoiled and still recoil from the finale to the choral symphony. Fanny Hensel, Mendelssohn's favourite sister,<sup>1</sup> spoke of the symphony as 'so grand and in parts so abominable', and of the finale as 'a conclusion meant to be dithyrambic, but falling from its height into the opposite extreme—into burlesque', and there are musicians to-day who preserve an almost equally implacable attitude towards it. But what we said of Monteverde may be applied to some extent to this phase of Beethoven (see Part I, p. 26). He could not find a new way without beginning by spoiling the old, though in Beethoven's case the old was his own priceless creation.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I

1. Play the Overture to *Der Freischütz*. Point out the situations in the opera with which the music of the overture is connected.

[The following are the principal ones :

(i) The opening of the *Molto vivace* of the overture is the music

<sup>1</sup> See *Die Familie Mendelssohn*, ed. 2, ii. 9.

with which the magician Samiel, who casts the magic bullets, appears to Max, the hero of the story.

(2) The first *fortissimo* introduces the storm music which succeeds the casting of the bullets with which the shooting match is to be won; it ends Act II.

(3) The second subject, in E flat, is the principal 'joy' theme of the opera. It concludes Agathe's scena alluded to above; it is also the finale of the whole opera.

(4) Since the overture is in sonata form all these episodes recur in the recapitulation; but notice that the vocal phrase of 'All' meine Pulse schlagen' precedes the joy theme in the coda of the overture.

Edition of *Der Freischütz*, with German and English text, published by Novello, 2s. 6d.]

2. Contrast Weber's method of building his overture from the dramatic material of the opera with that of Mozart, whose operatic overtures are for the most part independent. The overture to *Die Zauberflöte*, which in the case of the Priest's trumpet-call bears some reference to the operatic material, might well be placed beside that to *Der Freischütz*.

3. The knowledge of some German folk-songs, e.g. those which Brahms collected and edited, is indispensable to the understanding of the national character of Weber's melody.

[The distinction between the genuine folk-song (Volkslied) and the popular song more or less in the folk-song manner (Volkstümliches Lied) should be clearly shown. It is the same as that which exists in English song between the folk-melodies as found in Mr. Cecil Sharp's collections and the popular songs of such collections as 'The Minstrelsy of England' and 'Songs of Britain' (see illustrations to Chapter VIII).]

A good collection of German songs, including both types, is Erk's 'Deutscher Liederschatz' (Peters edition, 3 vols.).]

4. Play and sing the scena 'Leise, leise', and contrast with any well-known Italian arias of the period, e.g. the cavatina 'Una voce', which is the heroine's song in Rossini's *Il Barbiere*.

5. Play Beethoven's piano sonata, Op. 111, in C, and analyse. Place it beside one of the early sonatas, e.g. the 'Pathetic', Op. 13, which has certain points of likeness, but is more restricted in style, technically neater, but much less concentrated emotionally.

6. Play movements from posthumous quartets.

[The quartets are arranged for piano duet, Edition Peters, also obtainable in Payne's miniature scores.]

## CHAPTER II

### SCHUBERT AND SONG

WHILE Weber was busied with those innumerable activities, a sketch of which we gave in Chapter I, and while Beethoven was wrestling with the creation of his latest works, a young man hardly regarded by his contemporaries in Vienna, and unknown to the world beyond it, was pouring out music with feverish haste and laying up a store of melody which was to prove a gold-mine to the coming generation.

FRANZ SCHUBERT, born on January 31, 1797, was the son of a humble schoolmaster and the youngest of fourteen brothers and sisters. Consequently, like Haydn, he came to music without any worldly advantages to help him towards the carving out of a career, and without the doubtful advantage of a father's ambition to spur him on, which was an important condition in the early lives of both Mozart and Weber. He was given a good schooling, after which at the early age of seventeen he became an assistant teacher in his father's school, and there he might have remained for the rest of his life but for the fact that he was physically incapable of keeping his pen away from paper ruled in staves. This is no figure of speech. All the evidence shows that to Schubert the art of composition scarcely represented any conscious intellectual effort. He died at the age of thirty-one, yet he left a mass of music in every form the mere writing of which might have occupied an averagely long lifetime had he been checked by the ordinary processes of thought.

There are seven completed symphonies in existence, besides the famous 'Unfinished Symphony' and a sketch of one in E major. It is generally supposed that another symphony was written at Gastein in 1825 and lost. His chamber music includes the octet, the piano quintet in A ('Die Forellen'),

the string quintet with two violoncelli in C, several string quartets, two trios for piano and strings. For the piano there are many sonatas, including the 'Fantasie-Sonata' in G, the 'Wanderer-Fantasia', and innumerable shorter works such as the delightful 'Moments musicaux', and a profusion of waltzes and other dances, and marches. His choral music contains masses and oratorios with a great number of short pieces; his operas number seven, and yet when all this has been said we have not yet mentioned his supreme achievement, the creation of some six hundred songs.

Everything goes to show that his music grew like the lilies of the field. It would be untrue to say that 'he toiled not, neither did he spin', for the actual labour of writing kept him incessantly at work. But when asked about his method of composition he answered that as soon as he had finished one piece he began another, and when well-meaning friends pointed to the great example of Beethoven and suggested that he should improve his music by reconsideration and self-criticism he grew irritable. The instances in which he made any substantial revision of a work—the song 'Der Erlkönig' is one of them—are few. His progress was made not by improving works already finished but by writing more.

It will not be necessary for us to trace in detail a career which was governed by the simple principle of finishing one work and beginning another, varied only by lapses which allowed him to begin the new work before the old was finished. One of these lapses accounts for the fact that the most beautiful of all the symphonies consists only of an *allegro* and slow movement and is universally known to this day as the 'Unfinished'.

But there are just a few points about Schubert's life which cannot be ignored, and the first of them is that the so-called 'Convict' school in Vienna, which he entered at the age of thirteen, gave him more than a general education. It was for him practically a music school. It boasted an orchestra capable of playing the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, of Cherubini and Méhul, and even occasionally the early ones, then quite new, of Beethoven. And in this orchestra Schubert played the violin

and learnt to know music. It was here that he began to compose, and his boyish works show the force of these examples acting upon his own irrepressible individuality.

But it was in the years immediately after his leaving school that his wonderful outpouring of song began, and in the earliest songs one sees at once the influence not of other musicians but of the poets of the day. Indeed, there were no musical examples to guide him in the direction of song even if he had wanted guidance. Mozart's ideas of vocal music were inseparably bound up with the elaborated aria forms of the opera ; his songs for voice and piano are a mere handful, among which only one, 'Das Veilchen,' is a masterpiece of simple feeling. Beethoven's excursions into song, beautiful and heartfelt as some of them are, are the offshoots of a genius which expressed itself more naturally by other means. But the true song-writer needs no examples and follows no precedents. His own musical sense becomes fertilized by the poem ; the poem gives form to the music ; the music gives expression to the poem.

#### SCHUBERT AND GOETHE

Schubert's earliest songs, such as 'Gretchen am Spinnrade' (Gretchen at her spinning-wheel) and 'Der Erlkönig' (The Erlking), both by Goethe, show how his whole nature was seized by the spirit of poetry at once lyrical and dramatic. The years 1814 and 1815, in which these two songs were written, saw the birth of a whole group of songs to poems by Goethe. 'Heidenröslein' (The Wild Rose), 'Rastlose Liebe' (Restless Love), and 'Schäfers Klagelied' (The Shepherd's Lament) are among them, and to place these five side by side is to realize once and for all how completely pliable Schubert's music was to the thought of the poet. In these songs no preconceived ideas of musical form come between the musician and the poet. There is no repetition of words for the purposes of musical balance, there is never a scrap more of melody than the words actually require.

Take 'Heidenröslein' first. It is the simplest of them. A boy sees a wild rose blooming on the heath. It is so lovely

that he wants to pick it ; but roses have thorns. Still the boy does not care ; he wants the rose and will have it. He plucks it and suffers for his rashness. That is all. You may find for yourself the moral or the philosophy underlying the story ; neither Goethe nor Schubert will point it out. The poet tells it in a little lyric of three stanzas, each one ending with the refrain :

‘Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,  
Röslein auf der Heiden’;

the musician sets this to a tune of wonderful freshness caught from the phrase ‘so jung und morgenschön’ (so young and of a morning loveliness) and repeated to each stanza. The accompaniment supplies nothing but the lightest harmony with a tiny tripping interlude between the stanzas. Perhaps it seems rather obvious, and it may be suggested that to make the same phrase of melody stand for ‘Freuden’ (joy) in the first verse and ‘leiden’ (to suffer) in the other two is scarcely to give very close expression to the features of the verse.

But here we must consider a broad distinction between two different kinds of song—the strophic song, in which the music repeats itself with each stanza of the poetry, and the continuous song, composed throughout (‘durchcomponirt’), in which the music varies with each suggestion from the verse. Practically all folk-songs are of the former kind, and we may notice incidentally that the great majority of English songs until the present generation of composers arose were strophic.

Schubert did more than any one in his time to develop the larger form of songs composed throughout, but his judgement was almost unerring in choosing the right method for each particular instance. To set ‘Heidenröslein’ to music which distinguished each point and emphasized the boy’s pleasure on catching sight of the rose and his disillusionment when the thorn pricked his finger would be to reduce the thing to a bathos which only a modern German of an analytical frame of mind could contemplate with satisfaction. No ; Schubert knew what he was about, and it is just his choice of the unemphasized strophic form, the form which ignores details for the sake of the whole, which makes ‘Heidenröslein’ complete.

All the other four of this group are composed throughout ; 'Rastlose Liebe' and 'Schäfers Klagelied' stand next to one another in the collection of Goethe's *Lieder*. There is no hint of allegory in either ; each is dominated by a single impulse. The first is summed up in its last two lines :

'Glück ohne Ruh,  
Liebe, bist du !'  
(Happiness without rest,  
Love, art thou !)

The motto of the second may be found in the line :

'Doch alles ist leider ein Traum'  
(Yet all alas is a dream).

Looked at musically we find that the ruling impulse of 'Rastlose Liebe', its restlessness, is conveyed by the constantly moving arpeggio accompaniment. There is no pictorial suggestion of snow, wind, rain, and the other forces of nature mentioned in the poem, and all the climaxes of the vocal melody fall upon such phrases as 'ohne Rast und Ruh'!', 'Alles vergebens !', and the final 'O Liebe, bist du !'. These are supported by strong harmonic modulations, always a great means of expression with Schubert.

In 'Schäfers Klagelied', on the other hand, the accompaniment as well as the vocal part entirely changes its character with the mention of the flowers, the thunder-storm, and the rainbow. All these things impress themselves and form part of the shepherd's mood of sorrowful reflection. One thing both have in common, and that is the repetition of the last lines, but it is a repetition made not for the sake of a musical *coda* but in order to impress the poetic idea the more strongly.

A more subtle use of repetition is made at the end of 'Gretchen am Spinnrade'. This is, of course, the well-known song from *Faust* which Gretchen sings as she sits alone at her spinning-wheel. The repetitions of the first stanza,

'Meine Ruh' ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer,  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmermehr'

(My peace has fled,  
My heart is heavy,  
I find them never,  
Nevermore),

are Goethe's own as they occur in the drama, but Schubert has added once more the first two lines at the very end in a way which just makes the song revert to the idea of a dull and brooding grief after the passionate outburst is over. Here the accompaniment has nothing to do either with the prevailing feeling of the poem, as it has in 'Rastlose Liebe', or with its details, as in 'Schäfers Klagelied'. It is outside the poem itself, merely a part of the scene. It represents the monotonous hum of the spinning-wheel maintained incessantly save for one poignant moment where the singer recalls 'his kiss'. Then it ceases until she returns to her work falteringly, then steadily. The perfection with which the melody accentuates each phrase of words and at the same time is built up into a musical whole can scarcely need to be pointed out. That this intimate song was written by a boy of seventeen is one of the miracles of musical art.

'Der Erlkönig' is less miraculous, though in its own way it is a masterpiece. Here we have no deep personal feeling. It is just a most graphic presentation of the legend which Goethe's ballad tells with a relentless swiftness. You may find in the constant triplets of the piano part the ring of the horse's hoofs upon the ground, or the rustle of the wind among the leaves, or the agitation of the father as he clutches the child; it seems to have something to do with each in turn, yet there are practically no pictorial details in the rhythmic figures except the menacing figure of the bass,

**Ex. 4.**



in which one can fancy that one sees the sudden dart forward of the Erlking to snatch the child from his father's arms. The

three voices of the father, the child, and the Erlking are wonderfully conveyed both by the *tessitura* (that is, the part of the scale in which the phrases lie) of the voice part and in the modulations of key. The Erlking each time begins to speak in a major key<sup>1</sup> (B flat, C, E flat); he is an inhuman and soulless creature whose voice contrasts almost flippantly with those of warm-blooded human beings. When the boy cries out to his father for the last time the harmony becomes agonized.

## Ex. 5.

A chord consisting of E flat, F, and G flat was daring a hundred years ago. Schubert's use of it here is easily explicable even by the harmonic system of that day, but still it is a stretch of the system made in order to gain a point of dramatic intensity. It is one of the first of many stretches which that system was to suffer from, or profit by at the hands of Schubert's successors in the nineteenth century, and the process produced an expansion which in the end completely reshaped all ideas of harmony.

## SCHUBERT'S DEVELOPMENT

To return, however, to Schubert's own development, it was in the year 1815 that he began his friendship with Mayrhofer,

<sup>1</sup> The original key of the song is G minor and the references are made to the original. It is, however, most frequently sung by baritone voices in E minor.

a poet whose lyrics he set to music,<sup>1</sup> and who was probably constantly helpful to him in widening his knowledge of new poetry.

The circle of his friends began to widen, but it is noticeable that the names are mostly those of men actively concerned in poetry and literature and neither noblemen and leaders of society, as so many of the admirers of Beethoven were, nor musicians. Another whose name will also be found as author at the head of some of Schubert's songs was Franz von Schober,<sup>2</sup> who in the following year was a student at the University of Vienna, and who persuaded Schubert to give up his drudgery of school teaching and to live in his rooms in order to devote himself more freely to musical composition. In this year Schubert's songs took a wide range, but his devotion to Goethe is still shown in the number of that poet's poems which he set and the great variety of the music with which he endowed them. They range from the simple ballad 'Der Fischer' (The Fisher) to the titanic 'An Schwager Kronos', an ode to the time spirit and the swift though toilsome passage of life, and include the Harper's songs from *Wilhelm Meister* and others. Without pausing to study these songs in detail one quotation from 'An Schwager Kronos' must be given, because it points at once to certain characteristics of Schubert's style when he launched upon a song in 'the grand manner', and also because it shows him as the forerunner of Wagner's declamatory style (see p. 117).

## Ex. 6.

Auf denn, nicht träge denn, strebend und hoffend hin,

<sup>1</sup> See 'Am See', 'Am Strom', 'Der Alpenjäger', &c.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Pax Vobiscum', 'Viola', &c.

## SCHUBERT AND SONG

ah! Weit, hoch,

herr - lich rings den Blick . . . in's

Le - ben hin - ein, vom Ge -

- birg zum Ge - birg schwebet der e - wi - ge

Geist, e - wi - gen Le - bens

ahn - de - voll.

The abrupt change of key (E flat to E minor, bar 5) in contrast to the modulations by a process of sequential harmonies in the subsequent passage shows a new freedom of style, the sweeping arpeggios of the bass part have an exuberance quite unlike any of the music of the eighteenth-century composers, but often reappearing in the later German masters, particularly in the Wotan music of Wagner, the opening of Brahms's Third Symphony, and that of Strauss's 'Ein Heldenleben'. Schubert is led in this direction of exuberant freedom solely by the inspiration of a poetic idea; one finds few traces of it in his purely instrumental music. The bold harmonic sequences of Schubert's setting of Schiller's 'Gruppe aus dem Tartarus' (A Group from Tartarus), written a year later, should be compared with those of 'An Schwager Kronos'. The song is a second example of the masterful dramatic type.

Another song of this year is the famous setting of Von Lübeck's poem 'Der Wanderer', which, compared with 'An Schwager Kronos', is technically comparatively simple. Yet it is one of the most important songs in the whole of the great collection, not only for the truthfulness with which the melody conveys the feeling of the words, but for an historical reason which we will examine presently (see p. 38). The poem gave birth to the song, and the song a little later became the parent of one of Schubert's greatest works for piano, the *Wanderer-Fantasia*.

Two other exquisite songs, subsequently used by Schubert as the basis for purely instrumental works, were written in the following year (1817). These are 'Die Forelle' (The Trout) and 'Der Tod und das Mädchen' (Death and the Maiden). The first became the theme for variations in the quintet for piano and strings in A major; the second was similarly used in the string quartet in D minor. The two songs may well be contrasted. The one, a little fable of how the fish could not be caught in clear water but were soon tricked by the angler when the water was muddy, belongs to the same class of song as 'Heidenröslein', but Schubert has set it more fully. The third verse has an appropriate change of melody and key, and the

leaping accompaniment, figure (a), which pictures the fish in the clear water gets changed to a more compact one (b) with a wonderfully pictorial effect :

Ex. 7. (a)

(b)

Er macht das

Bäch - lein tück - isch trü - - be,

The other is no fable ; it is a fragment of direct dialogue. The Maiden struggles to avoid Death, but he takes her hand and stills her cries. The music is equally direct ; the only point which needs attention called to it is the subtle way in which the rhythm of Death's song creeps into the piano part four bars before the end of the Maiden's part. That rhythm itself is so like the slow movement of Beethoven's seventh symphony that one almost wonders whether a reference was intended, but Schubert was not given to quotation.

The year 1818 saw a change in the outward circumstances of Schubert's life ; it is also the year of a great change in himself. The outward change was merely the acquisition of a musical appointment, the only regular appointment which he ever held, and that a sufficiently modest one, as music teacher to the daughters of Count Johann Esterhazy, a younger member of

the family who were Haydn's patrons. This in itself was of small consequence beyond the fact that it provided Schubert with a living and caused him to write a considerable quantity of piano music and duets for the benefit of his pupils. He spent the summer in their country house at Zselesz, a name which you may remember if you want to by spelling it backwards ; but a better way of remembering Schubert's time there is by singing or playing the lovely little song called 'Abendrot' (Sunset), which he wrote there.

#### INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

But the change in himself showed itself almost immediately in a change in his music which may be described as growing up. This does not show itself so much in his songs, for the composer of such songs as we have been studying could have little or nothing to add to his powers in that direction. Since the composition of 'Gretchen am Spinnrade' he had been fully grown in his capacity for seizing on the inner spirit of any poem which came before him and expressing that spirit in musical sound. But that very art of song-writing is itself dependent upon another mind. It is the gift of sympathy in its fullest form.

The independent power of creating something essentially his own comes to the musician in pure instrumental music, and it was this power which Schubert acquired at this time. Remember that he was only twenty-one years old, and he had before him only ten more years of life. In those ten years he composed practically all the great instrumental works which, apart from his songs, give him his place next to Beethoven among the great composers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The series begins with the pianoforte quintet (1819) which has variations on 'Die Forelle' as its slow movement, and which is written for an unusual set of instruments, for the string quartet chosen to go with the piano is not the usual one of two violins, viola, and violoncello, but one violin, viola, violoncello, and double bass. Schubert's fondness for the double bass in chamber music is shown again in the Octet, but there it is added to the ordinary string quartet, and the presence of wind instru-

ments (clarinet, bassoon, and horn) gives the score a greater fullness, so that the deep-toned bass (an octave below the violoncello) has an effect resembling that of the small orchestra.

In the years immediately following 1819 are several works never completed, which, however, are scarcely less important on that account. First comes a string quartet in C minor, of which one movement, the first *allegro*, was finished and the second, an *andante*, was begun. The completed movement is often played and is known as the 'Quartettsatz' (Quartet movement). Two symphonies followed, one in E and one in B minor, but both were left unfinished.

It is curious to notice, however, that Schubert adopted opposite methods in composing these two symphonies; the one in E he sketched out in full, arranging the four movements, their keys, themes, even the number of bars each was to contain and the instruments to be used. He then began the process of writing the details, and left off in the middle of the first movement. The symphony in B minor, however, he composed according to his more usual plan, movement by movement. He finished the first *allegro* in B minor, went on to the slow movement in E, finished that, and began a *scherzo* which he abandoned. We may be thankful that the first of these two methods was exceptional. The symphony in E remains merely an interesting manuscript, but the 'Quartettsatz' and still more the two movements of the symphony in B minor are priceless musical possessions which rejoice the hearts of music-lovers to this day. The proverb of the bird in the hand gets the fullest consent where such music is concerned.

Nearly contemporary with these works is the great Fantasia in C for piano, in which the 'Wanderer' theme is the principal motive. In 1824 the Octet was written as well as several string quartets, of which the one in A minor is the most famous. The list of great instrumental works then grows steadily. The best of his piano sonatas follow, including the 'Fantaisie' Sonata in G. Two more string quartets, D minor and G, the former containing the variations on 'Der Tod und das Mädchen', lead to the two trios for piano and strings, B flat and E flat (the

former is so beautiful that it usurps the attention which is due to the latter), and those written in 1827, the last complete year of Schubert's life, are followed in the year of his death by the magnificent symphony in C major and the quintet, also in C, for two violins, viola, and two violoncello.

That is to give the barest outline of the flood of beautiful things which were the outcome of Schubert's ten years of manhood. It is not necessary for us to submit them to close analysis, but it is very necessary to take every opportunity of hearing them and knowing them practically. If we were to analyse them we should find that almost all except the two movements of the 'Unfinished' Symphony contain points at which the actual form is open to some criticism. They are long, there is much repetition, and, when writing in sonata-form, Schubert often seems rather bored by the conventional need for a recapitulation to follow the development. He follows out its course rather mechanically and sometimes resorts to the plan of making the whole recapitulation a transposed version of the first statement. But even if one is conscious of these disadvantages, and the listener who does not analyse closely hardly is conscious of them, they still exercise a unique charm. They are all permeated with the song spirit. Often one feels as though Schubert's instrumental melodies must have been written to some poetry which he had in mind.

His development of the *Wanderer* Song in the *Fantaisie* gives an example of his power of expanding into a great instrumental piece a thought which began with a song. This *Fantaisie* is quite different from either his own treatment of song melodies as a basis for regular variations, as in the 'Forellen' quintet and the quartet in D minor, or from the instrumental paraphrases on songs of which Liszt made many. Liszt's paraphrases on songs by Schubert and others take the whole song and adapt it to the technique of the piano. Schubert's *Fantaisie* on the *Wanderer* uses very little of the actual matter of the song. The only actual quotation is of one phrase which is neither the principal theme of the song nor used as a refrain. The passage as it appears in the song is as follows :

Ex. 8.

Die Son - ne dünkt mich hier so . . . kalt, die

Blü - the . . . welk, das Le - ben alt, und

was sic re - den lee - rer . . . Schall, ich

bin ein Fremd - ling ü - ber - all.

And this appears in the Fantaisie as the principal theme, freely developed, of the second movement, *adagio*. The whole Fantaisie

consists of four movements in the manner of a sonata but linked together, and all the other three, that is (1) *allegro con fuoco*, (3) *presto* (virtually a *scherzo*), (4) *allegro* (written in the manner of a free fugue), are developments out of the following theme :

Ex. 9.



This in itself seems to be a kind of extension of the song melody quoted above but so much extended that if it were not for the actual quotation of that melody in the *adagio* one could not recognize the reference. Out of the development of this springs yet another melody which has no counterpart at all in the song but is a definite second subject :

Ex. 10.



Both these themes are entirely transformed in rhythm to form the subject-matter of the third movement, and the first of them is again altered to be the fugal subject of the Finale.

It is worth while touching on these technical details in order to show two points : first, that a tune which began in Schubert's mind as a song melody could so grow there that it became as different from its origin as the tree is different from the first sprout ; secondly, that this *Fantaisie* is virtually a complete **symphonic poem** upon the idea of the *Wanderer*, and we shall have much to do with symphonic poems as we trace the music of the nineteenth century (see pp. 67, 70, 150, 174).

#### THE SONG CYCLES

We need not, however, follow the history of the symphonic poem at the moment. Instead, a few words must be added to

complete our survey of Schubert as a song-writer. The years in which his chief instrumental works appeared were no less prolific in songs than the earlier ones.

They include with many single ones the three sets known as 'Die schöne Müllerin' (The Lovely Maid of the Mill), 'Winterreise' (Winter Journey), and the 'Schwanengesang' (Swan Songs). The first two, containing twenty and twenty-four songs respectively, are genuine cycles, that is to say, each is a set of poems linked together by a common idea. Both were written by Wilhelm Müller, a friend of Schubert, and both were set to music soon after they were written, the former completed in 1823, the latter in 1827. 'Die schöne Müllerin' is the easier to comprehend as a whole because it is an idyllic love-story told in lyric verse. There are three principal characters in the story, the singer who is the lover, the maid of the mill, and the mill-stream which murmurs through all their romance. The story itself is a sad one; the lovers do not 'live happily ever after'. The confidences which the mill-stream has to hear are of many kinds. First the young miller wanders careless and happy by its banks; then it receives his hopes and fears. The full awakening of his love for the master's daughter is told in 'Am Feierabend' (In the Eventide); the triumph of success is sung to the stream in 'Mein' (Mine) with its buoyant refrain 'Die geliebte Müllerin ist mein!' Afterwards there are fresh doubts; the hunter comes upon the scene, and the hunter is a greater hero than a poor miller. The maiden's favourite colour, the green of leaves and grass, becomes the hateful colour because it is the green of the huntsman's coat, and the miller has to give her up. The song 'Trockne Blumen' (Withered Flowers) sums up his grief, his only hope the thought that his love may pass his grave when winter is gone and the flowers bloom again. The cycle ends with 'Des Baches Wiegenlied' (The Stream's Cradle-song), in which all trouble is stilled by the quiet of nature.

It is not great poetry and it is quite frankly sentimental. But Schubert keeps it on the right side of the line between sentiment and sentimentality because his whole expression of the sentiment is true and simple. His music never wallows or gushes or

protests too much, and so he carries his hearers with him at every point.

The songs of the 'Winterreise' are less clearly consecutive. They are neither strung together on the thread of a definite story nor unified by one pictorial background such as that which the idea of the mill-stream provides for the 'Müllerlieder'. But from the first, 'Gute Nacht' (Good-night), to the last, 'Der Leiermann' (The Organ-grinder), they are pervaded by the idea of loneliness, and the very persistence of the idea in spite of the great variety of ways in which it is illustrated makes the cycle too monotonous for complete performance. Almost every one of its songs, however, is a masterpiece in itself. Among the most typical are 'Die Wetterfahne' (The Weathercock), in which the undulating melody pictures the turning about of the vane in the wind; 'Der Lindenbaum' (The Linden Tree), one of Schubert's loveliest melodies with a beautiful rustling accompaniment with which should be compared 'Frühlingstraum' (A Dream of Spring); 'Die Post' (The Post) with its vigorous illustration of the post-boy's horn; and lastly, 'Der Leiermann', in which the old organ-grinder's tune drones wearily through the whole song.

The 'Schwanengesang' is not really a cycle. The collective title was given to the songs on their publication after Schubert's early death and is not very appropriate, for the legend of

'The silver swan who living had no note,  
When death approached unlocked her silent throat,'

is certainly inapplicable to Schubert, who had poured out song from childhood. The collection, too, includes songs by three authors: seven by Rellstab, which the poet had written in the hope that Beethoven would set them; six by Heine, the only ones by him which Schubert ever set; and one by Seidl, a poet from whom Schubert had often drawn before.

That Heine, the poet who more than any other was to influence German song in the next generation most powerfully, should have dawned upon Schubert's horizon just in time to be greeted with the response of these six musical settings is in

itself a remarkable presage of events, and Schubert's music responds to the new poetic impulse. The first song, 'Der Atlas', should be placed beside 'An Schwager Kronos' and 'Gruppe aus dem Tartarus'. Its declamation is akin to theirs, but there is less musical elaboration. All save 'Das Fischermädchen' (The Fisher-maiden) are touched with tragedy.

The last, 'Der Doppelgänger' (The Wraith), is the most tragic of all. A man stands in the silent street before a house where once his beloved lived. He is conscious of another figure standing there. Suddenly the moon lights up the face of the other and, horror-struck, he recognizes—himself. It is his double which haunts the empty scene of his past love and present grief. Schubert's music has the simplicity which only the most inspired things can afford to have. It is inexplicable; one cannot say why these four chords are so relentlessly haunting, though the fact that each contains only two notes contributes to their strangely hollow effect:

Ex. 11.

The song has little positive melody, but every note is in place as an expression both of the prevalent feeling and of the particular details of the short poem.

#### A SUMMARY OF RESULTS

With this wonderful example of concentration upon the essence of the poetry we may leave the detailed study of Schubert's songs. It is time, however, to sum up what he achieved as a writer of songs and to see how his achievement affected his successors.

1. Schubert was the first musician to realize fully that the three qualities of a poem, (a) its mood, (b) its meaning, (c) its form, can find a counterpart in music at the same time. Others before him had laid stress upon one or the other and generally

sacrificed one or other of these qualities in order to get close to that which appealed most strongly.

2. The musical impulse was so strong in Schubert that he was in no danger of sacrificing musical beauty to these poetic requirements. His greatest songs, those which reflect the qualities of the poem, can be played as well as sung, as Liszt showed when he made his transcriptions of them, and as Schubert himself indicated by incorporating some examples in purely instrumental works.

3. This triple influence of poetry on music had a threefold influence on his musical technique:

(a) The mood of the poem led him to give the piano part of the song an increased significance. (See 'Rastlose Liebe', 'Der Erlkönig', and 'Die Forelle'.)

(b) The meaning of particular lines, phrases, and words in the poem made him widen the range of possible harmonies. (See 'Der Erlkönig', 'An Schwager Kronos', 'Der Doppelgänger'.)

(c) The form of the poem indicated new musical forms free from the repetitions of aria or sonata, and these new forms were transferred by his successors from vocal music to the instrumental symphonic poem.

#### GERMAN SONG-WRITERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

All the great German composers of the nineteenth century were to a certain extent song-writers, and all were indebted to Schubert, some of them far more than they knew, for the freedom and certainty with which they handled their poetic material.

Mendelssohn felt his influence less strongly than any of them. He followed too close upon Schubert's heels to know thoroughly what he had done, for it must be remembered that though a certain number of Schubert's songs had been published in Vienna his fame had not flown far, and he died leaving stacks of unexplored manuscripts which were for some years left in the same oblivion which the masterpieces of J. S. Bach suffered from. Mendelssohn wrote a number of very charming songs, but he never hungered or thirsted for great poetry (see p. 86). His popular setting of Heine's 'Auf Flügeln des Gesanges'

(On the wings of song) is typical ; a gracious melody supported by some gently flowing piano arpeggios is sufficient for his delight. Look through Mendelssohn's songs and see how many of them are about spring and flowers and you will get a fairly clear idea of the simple unimpassioned things with which he most naturally linked his easy music. Place Mendelssohn's setting of Uhland's 'Frühlingsglaube' (Faith in Spring) beside Schubert's setting of the same poem and form your own estimate as to which is the more intimate both as a piece of music and as an expression of the words.

That sort of comparison is very helpful as a means of gaining an insight into the different characters and capacities of composers, but of course one must be careful not to jump to general conclusions as a result of comparing individual songs. In this case the inference is clear, because Mendelssohn's setting is an average example of his style in song, and Schubert's, though a fair example of his way of treating little poems, is by no means one of his greatest songs. But it is easy to find single songs by quite inferior composers which are as good and possibly better than Schubert's.

If one suddenly came upon Edward Loder's 'I heard a brooklet gushing', which is a translation of the second poem in 'Die schöne Müllerin', one might imagine that Loder (1808-1865) was an English Schubert, a genius whom his countrymen had wilfully neglected in favour of the foreigner. For it is a lovely little song, in some respects more subtly expressive than Schubert's 'Wohin' ; but it is practically alone amongst Loder's songs, and those which are settings of genuine English poems bear no possibility of comparison with Schubert.

Or to take a stronger example, the ballads of Carl Loewe (1796-1869) are famous, and his setting of 'Der Erlkönig', which he composed in 1818 almost at the same time as Schubert wrote his, has often been compared favourably with Schubert's. But Loewe's powers appear at their best almost exclusively in one kind of song, the dramatic ballad, of which 'Der Erlkönig' is a German example and 'Edward' is a Scottish one. He gives one nothing which can be placed beside the numerous lyrical songs of Schubert.

Again, take Berlioz's setting of the 'King of Thule' song as it appears in *La Damnation de Faust*. Its constant brooding over one interval (the augmented fourth) gives it a certain colour which Schubert's plain setting has not got, yet on the whole Berlioz, in spite of all his love of poetry, had nothing like Schubert's readiness in finding an apt musical expression for it.

When we come to trace the development of song in the work of Schubert's successors, particularly those of German-speaking nations, it is possible to make much broader comparisons, because some of them re-set much of the poetry, especially that of Goethe, which Schubert began to set, and one can see in their work the advantages of time and experience. To take the music which Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Hugo Wolf associated with the poems of *Wilhelm Meister* is an extraordinarily telling way of illustrating the advance made through the nineteenth century in adapting musical expression to poetic mood, sense, and form.

The three great German song-writers of the later nineteenth century were Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf. Wagner in his 'Five Poems' and a few other examples left just sufficient to show that he too might have been among the great song-writers if he had not been so completely preoccupied with dramatic music. Indeed, his music dramas are in a sense the extension of Schubert's song style to the stage. That, however, we may leave on one side for the moment.

Schumann was the man ideally fitted to take up song where Schubert had left it. Temperament, education, and circumstances all marked him out for a great song-writer, for he grew up amongst books and all his earliest ideas of art were closely associated with poetry. But it was some time before the results began to appear in actual settings of poetry to music. Almost all his early works are for piano, and the songs which are most famous now were composed in a rush of enthusiasm in the years immediately following his marriage (see pp. 84, 87). The lyrics of Geibel, Rückert, Eichendorff, and, most of all, those of Heine, fascinated him, and the cycle of sixteen songs called 'Dichterliebe' (Poet's

Love) may be taken as typical of Schumann's ideal in song. The thing which most stamps these and other songs as Schumann's own is their human sympathy. One may find something of the same quality in certain songs of Schubert, but it is the constant motive in Schumann. One cannot explain exactly by referring to technical matters how this quality expresses itself, but if you hear either the 'Dichterliebe' cycle or the shorter 'Frauenliebe und -leben' (Woman's Love and Life), poems by Chamisso, you cannot fail to be conscious of it. Schumann seems to be himself living through the experiences of the poet's characters, and this makes his songs peculiarly lovable although his actual range of musical expression is shorter than Schubert's.

Brahms in his songs is more like Schubert in his wide musical range and has not quite the glowing personal sympathy of Schumann. In the case of Brahms musical beauty takes a place above the expression of the poetry, while with Wolf the expression of the poetry is so all important that he sometimes thrusts the musical qualities aside. Consequently some of Brahms's greatest songs spring from poems which are not very significant and are even rather trivial in themselves, the exquisite music of 'Die Mainacht' (A May night), for instance, raises the poem to power higher than itself (see p. 134).

But rough generalizations such as these are not to be taken for granted. You may find examples in Brahms which suggest the sympathy of Schumann, for instance 'Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer' (Ever lighter grows my slumber), and a comparison of Wolf's 'In dem Schatten meiner Locken' (In the shadow of my tresses) with Brahms's will not show Wolf's to be behind in musical beauty, rather the reverse, in fact. One can only venture upon general conclusions as a result of thorough knowledge of a great number of particular cases, and the weighing of one against another can only begin when we have got a wide knowledge of the works themselves. Since both Brahms and Wolf left well over two hundred songs each, that means an amount of close study which we cannot pretend to undertake in a short course such as this, but the suggestions given can be used as hints for individual study.

## WOLF'S CAREER

A more precise word may be added here about Wolf, although to do so at this stage is to upset the chronological progress of our story. But since Wolf was almost entirely a song-writer and nothing else—he wrote besides only a couple of operas, a little choral music, and a few instrumental pieces—it is most natural to deal with him while we are on the subject of song, whereas both Schumann and Brahms are essential figures in other phases of musical history. There are a good many things in Wolf's short and sad life which are like Schubert's, but the fact that his life was lived at the end instead of at the beginning of the nineteenth century makes a world of difference.

HUGO WOLF was born in 1860, the fourth son of a fairly well-to-do family living at Windischgrätz in Lower Styria. His father was his first music teacher, but seems to have had some objections to the boy devoting his life to music. These objections cannot have been pressed very seriously, however, because Hugo was only fifteen when he was sent to study at the Vienna Conservatoire. During his first year as a music student Wagner came to Vienna for performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* at the Opera and Wolf fell down before him in an ecstasy of boyish hero-worship. After two years he got dismissed from the Conservatoire, as Haydn was from St. Stephen's (see Part II, p. 37), for an offence which is said to have been really that of another student, and, like Haydn, he then set himself to battle with poverty and win his way in the difficult life of a big city.

No princely patronage came to help him, for that with its benefits and its evils had long since passed away. He tried to teach and lost his temper with his pupils. He soon began to compose songs, and the twelve published as 'Lieder aus der Jugendzeit' (Songs of youth) belong to the years 1877-8. When he was twenty-one he got a post as second Kapellmeister (conductor) at the Salzburg town-theatre, where Carl Muck, one of the greatest living conductors of Wagner, was then chief Kapellmeister. Wolf was no more successful in this post than as a teacher of private pupils, and he was soon back in Vienna

again. A visit to Bayreuth in 1882, the year that *Parsifal* was produced, broke the monotony of the next years, and then in 1884 he took up criticism in a newspaper as a means of earning a living and developing his own character. In that more than anything else, perhaps, you see the difference between him and Schubert. Criticism would have been a waste of time to Schubert; it was necessary to Wolf's development. He needed to clear his own mind by expressing it publicly. Granted that some of his criticism was futile, especially his tilting at his greater contemporary, Brahms, it served his purpose. He began to see what he himself must do to be saved, and all his greatest songs were poured out in the few years following his critical escapades. The fifty-three settings of poems by Mörckie, the majority of those by Eichendorff, and about half the fifty songs of Goethe were written in 1888; the remainder of the Goethe songs, the 'Spanisches Liederbuch' (Spanish Song-book, words by Geibel and Paul Heyse), followed in 1889-90, and the 'Italienisches Liederbuch' (Italian Song-book, words by Heyse) was the work of the 'nineties. These represent roughly the sum of Wolf's important contribution to music. And when you come to study them a few facts must be remembered: (1) that Wolf is essentially a disciple of Wagner, not in the sense of copying his work, for Wolf carried what he had learnt from Wagner into an entirely different side of music, but in his attitude towards the combination of music and poetic ideas; (2) that Wolf lived amongst poets and drew his inspiration from them; (3) that by the time that he was growing up the violent partisanship in musical life which was one of the most unhappy products of the strenuous nineteenth century had come to a head.

Wolf died in 1903, and the last few years of illness resulting in madness had made him quite incapable of continuing any musical work. He is therefore, strictly speaking, the last of the great writers of German song in the nineteenth century. The list might be extended with many names beyond those mentioned, but we will not extend it beyond pointing to the fact that the song begun by Schubert had its direct development in other countries. Grieg in Norway and Dvořák in Bohemia strongly

reflected their own national folk-songs, but still owed much to the German example. Sterndale Bennett in England, contemporary and friend of Mendelssohn and Schumann, was another descendant of the same family. His songs are much more nearly related to the style of Mendelssohn than they are to the older English songs of such composers as Shield, Bishop, and Balfé. The recovery of its own musical characteristics came later in English song, and is going on now in the works of a dozen or more fine song-writers headed by Stanford and Parry (see p. 188).

In France and still more definitely in Russia national ideals expressed in national poetry have produced types quite distinct from the lines on which Schubert worked. We shall therefore touch upon them in connexion with other aspects of the musical history of those countries which belong for the most part to later phases of our study. (See Chapters VII and VIII.)

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II

1. The songs taken as typical examples of Schubert's style in this chapter must be sung and the distinctions pointed out.
2. Illustrate the distinction between the strophic form and the song composed throughout by other examples besides those quoted in the text. [The songs of Weber give many simple examples of the former type.]
3. Institute comparisons between different settings of the same poem by different composers, also between settings of different poems having some point of similarity.
4. Analyse several songs from the point of view of (1) melodic contour (declamation), (2) figures of accompaniment, (3) harmony and modulation.
5. Analyse the 'Wanderer-Fantaisie' at the piano; compare it with the song; show its bearing upon the new idea of the symphonic poem.
6. Play Liszt's paraphrases of well-known songs by Schubert (e.g. 'Der Erlkönig') to illustrate further the extension of the song to the instrumental symphonic poem.

## BOOKS OF REFERENCE

*Oxford History of Music*, vols. v and vi, by W. H. Hadow and E. Dannreuther. (Oxford University Press.)

[Contain chapters on Song.]

*Hugo Wolf*, by Ernest Newman. (Methuen.)

[Contains besides complete analysis of Wolf's work an illuminating study of the aesthetic principles of song.]

*Interpretation in Song*, by H. Plunket Greene. (Macmillan.)

[Contains a study of like principles from the point of view of the performer.]

*The Master Musicians* series, published by J. M. Dent & Co.

Volumes on Schubert (Edmondstone Duncan),

Schumann (Annie Patterson),

Mendelssohn (S. S. Stratton),

Brahms (Laurence Erb).

[Contain outlines of composers' lives and summaries of works.]

## CHAPTER III

### THE ORCHESTRA AND BERLIOZ

THE inventive spirit of the nineteenth century had its direct effect in the mechanical improvement of many musical instruments. We saw (Part II, Chapter II) how the general principles of different classes of instruments were gradually discovered by musicians in the effort to improve their music. By the year 1800 practically all the instruments of importance to us now were known and used, but only two classes, the violin family and the trombones, were actually the same as they are now. All the other instruments of the orchestra, as well as the organ, the piano, and the harp, have had in the course of the nineteenth century many scientific inventions applied to them which have (1) made good playing on them an easier matter, (2) made it possible to perform on them music which before was beyond the range of possibility.

Notice the distinction between these two results. The first benefits the performer, the second benefits the composer. Both of course benefit the listener, and as we are studying music chiefly as listeners we must take account of both. But the second kind, the kind which has made it possible for composers to write what before would have been out of the question because no player however clever could have produced the sounds from his instrument, is obviously of greater importance for us.

The mechanical improvements of the organ belong entirely to the first class; by the use of pneumatic tubes and electric currents all sorts of means have been contrived to shorten the distance between the organist and the pipe from which the sound comes. For example, the organist of to-day instead of having to move a large and cumbersome piece of machinery

every time he draws a stop, merely presses a button with his finger or touches a lever with his foot, which acts direct by means of electric or pneumatic contact. This saves physical effort and makes possible certain changes of tone which were impossible before, but it does not place any new kind of music within the reach of the organist. The case is very similar with regard to the inventions by which the action of the piano has been improved. The piano to-day is far more responsive to the player's touch, but it is still to all intents and purposes the same instrument as that for which Beethoven wrote his last sonatas. Nothing as drastic as the change from the harpsichord to the piano (see Part II, p. 20) has occurred within the last century, but inventors have gone on finding out how the principle of the piano could be better applied, and composers and pianists have gone on finding that the piano was capable of new effects which were undreamed of by the inventors (see p. 97).

The harp, on the other hand, gives a good example of the second kind of invention. It is, of course, one of the oldest of instruments, but the harp which you hear in the orchestra is practically the invention of the last century.

The harp had, and still has, only eight strings to the octave; in other words, if you run your finger up the strings of the harp, plucking each one, you get, not a chromatic scale of semitones as you do from the strings of the piano, but a major diatonic scale. That shows you at once its limitations; the question for makers of harps was how to make it possible for their instruments to modulate to other keys and to use the semitones not belonging to the major scale in which the strings were tuned, and that question was not satisfactorily solved by any of the makers of the eighteenth century in spite of many attempts.

Of course, for the accompaniment of simple songs, for which the harp was much used by young ladies, the diatonic scale was fairly satisfactory, but for anything like big music the old harp was useless. Most of the improvements, including the one which made the harp capable of taking its place in the orchestra, came from Frenchmen. This was known as the 'double action', which Sebastian Erard perfected in the first years of

the new century. It is an arrangement by which the harp is provided with seven pedals, each acting on one of the seven notes of the scale in such a way that when the player lowers the pedal one degree a metal pin 'stops' the string, raising the pitch one semitone; when he lowers the pedal a degree further another pin stops the string further down, raising its pitch yet another semitone. Thus it becomes possible to play with equal ease in any key simply by arranging the pedals, and it provides for the use of every note in the chromatic scale. It does not, however, give the equality which the notes of the piano have for two reasons: (1) because a pedal takes an appreciable moment of time to act, so that the rapid succession of chromatic notes is still impossible, and (2) because each pedal acts on all the notes of a given name; all the C flats become C naturals, all the D flats D naturals, &c., by the first action of the pedals applied to them.

We need not go closely into the technique of the harp; all we have to do is to realize how Erard's invention brought a new lease of life to the harp, and at the same time that even this left something to be desired. French artists and manufacturers have gone on experimenting, and now a chromatic harp having a string to each note has been brought into existence. French composers of to-day, such as Debussy and Ravel, are writing music for it, but it has not yet replaced Erard's harp in ordinary use.

#### WIND INSTRUMENTS

All the wind instruments of the orchestra except the trombones have been transformed or at least reformed, but, roughly speaking, we may say that the wood wind instruments have been affected in the first of the two ways indicated and the brass in the second. What is known as the Boehm system of keys and fingering has had perhaps the greatest influence of the many inventions applied to the wood wind instruments. First applied to the flute by Theobald Boehm, it has been used with necessary modifications for the other instruments—oboes, clarinets, and bassoons. But though the wonderfully intricate system of silver

keys and rods which you see on the modern instruments of the orchestra has made certain passages possible which were impossible before, its chief value has been to assure efficient playing, true intonation, and certainty of tone and phrasing. The range of the instruments remains practically the same, but players can use it to better advantage.

The case of the brass instruments—horns and trumpets—is a very different one, and more like that of the harp, except that they were in still more dire need of completion, for they had not even the whole diatonic scale at their disposal. We touched upon their difficulties quite early in our study when Bach's second Brandenburg concerto gave us a lively example of the trumpet's capacities (see Part I, pp. 156-7). The plan by which the imperfect scale of horns and trumpets could be transposed into different keys by means of 'crooks', which by increasing or diminishing the length of their tubes transposed the whole downwards or upwards, was there explained.

The condition of horns and trumpets then in the eighteenth century and even in Beethoven's day was this: they could make use of an incomplete scale in *every* key, but they could not produce a complete diatonic scale over their whole range in *any* key. A complete chromatic one was, of course, out of the question. This at a time when composers were writing for orchestra as for everything else with more and more chromatic freedom became a very serious handicap. How could it be met? One way in which composers such as Weber and Spontini got over the difficulty was to use more of these instruments, 'crook' them in different keys, and write for each the notes which the different keys provided. The beautiful horn melody at the beginning of the overture to *Der Freischütz* is arranged for four horns, two in F and two in C, and each pair plays the bit most convenient to its range. The plan is perfectly satisfactory in its artistic result here, but like so many musicians' plans it has a weakness, and the weakness is a commercial one.

Berlioz, the great orchestrator of the next generation, proceeded to develop it without regard to its weakness. He required a great many instruments in order to be able to write all the

things he wanted to write, and this increased the difficulty of getting his works performed. For when you multiply instruments you multiply players, and players have to be paid, and it is not generally the composer who does the paying. Berlioz began the fashion of orchestral luxury which has been continued to the present day. Here is a simple example :

## Ex. 12.

He wants a horn to reinforce the tune of the trombones. Those notes scattered about the three horn parts which look so

queer, sound in unison with the bass trombone. Now one horn in unison with a tenor and a bass trombone (not to mention the ophicleide, an instrument now obsolete) does not have any very material effect, yet Berlioz lavishes three players on the passage and even then does not get it fully reproduced on the horn.

So much for the problem; now for its practical solution. That came quite early in the century by the invention of what is known as the 'valve' system, applied to horns and trumpets alike. It consists of the addition of a mechanism by which three little pistons pressed by the player's fingers open valves bringing an extra length of tube into action. When you lengthen a tube or a string you lower its pitch, and so when you press the first piston all the available notes are producible one semitone lower. The second piston lowers them a whole tone, the third lowers them three semitones, and since two or all three may be used together with cumulative effect it becomes possible to fill in all the blank spaces between the natural notes. So any tune and any chromatic passage at last became possible on the horns and trumpets.

One would think that such a resource would be hailed with joy by composers, but that was very far from being the case. As a matter of fact, the passage quoted above from Berlioz's '*Roméo et Juliette*' was written many years after the invention of the valve horn, which Berlioz knew all about. For a long time composers turned a cold shoulder on the valve instruments for two reasons: they thought them inferior to the natural ones in tone and intonation, which was true only at first, and they liked exercising their ingenuity, as in this example, to combat the imperfections of the old instruments. Even when they adopted the valved instruments they often went on writing for them more or less as though the valves must not be used except in extreme need; moreover, having adopted the four-horn plan it never occurred to them to return to two, as in many cases they might quite well have done. So far from the inventions producing an economy of players, composers very often wrote for both natural and valve instruments.

The increase of numbers in the orchestra has been one of the

most obvious changes in the last century. That is partly due to the conditions. The orchestra is no longer the private possession of an individual kept for the entertainment of himself and his friends, as in the days of Haydn. Public performances in large halls became more general ; music was made a democratic enjoyment. It was not all gain—in fact, in some respects the size of orchestras has become a nuisance—but in so far as it meant a greater range of expression and variety of tone as distinct from the mere increase of volume, it has been a real gain.

#### STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

Though the stringed instruments of the violin family remain exactly what they were a hundred years ago, their greater numbers in the modern orchestra have produced all sorts of ways of writing for them which make their orchestral position very different. We saw that the strings of Haydn's orchestra meant practically a string quartet with the parts doubled. The strings of the modern orchestra are never that for very long at a time. Composers are constantly subdividing the parts and contrasting them with one another. To find the violins, firsts and seconds, divided into six or eight parts and contrasted with a quartet of violas or of violoncellos is now quite common. Berlioz found that even the double basses could be used alone in chords with a very striking effect, and it was he who first fully exploited the separate capabilities of the strings, but especially of the most neglected members of the family, the violas and the double basses.

#### NEW VARIETIES OF INSTRUMENTS

We said that practically all the orchestral wind instruments were known and used in the eighteenth century, but endless varieties of those instruments have been introduced during the nineteenth. In fact, as soon as the brass instruments became perfected by the use of valves manufacturers began a process very much like the processes of horticulture which produce every year new varieties of rose or narcissus. From the principles of the single-valved horn and trumpet, brass instruments of all shapes and

sizes (consequently of all pitches and qualities), from the popular cornet to the ponderous bass tuba, were evolved; and since every maker who invented a new variety gave some new name to his invention, the instruments of these types became almost as confusing to distinguish as the kinds of roses in a nurseryman's catalogue. We need not trouble ourselves with the varieties but merely notice that the tuba family of instruments, though invented primarily for the military band, became a most valuable addition to the orchestra because it provided tenor and bass parts to the trumpet group.

Similarly, other instruments were extended into complete families, of which the clarinets are the most varied. They are found in all sizes from the little high treble clarinet in E flat to the bass clarinet which sounds an octave below the ordinary clarinet in B flat. And now there is a double bass clarinet an octave below the bass clarinet. So this multiplication of varieties goes on, but only occasionally something like a real novelty has been reached, again by the method of the horticulturist, that is to say, by crossing the species.

Adolph Sax, one of the most celebrated of instrument makers, produced a set of instruments made of brass but played with a reed like the clarinet, which he called Saxophones, and which are of such mixed origin that they cannot be said to belong to any group but their own. And there have been other hybrids which have been similarly successful, but their existence does not alter the fact that the main instrumental types remain identical with those of the old orchestra, though the technique of playing them and of writing for them has changed.

That will be most easily understood if we turn from the instruments themselves to the man who in the first half of the last century most thoroughly understood them, and who first sorted the confused mass of the growing orchestra into a definite order.

#### BERLIOZ AND TONE COLOUR

It was in 1822 that HECTOR BERLIOZ, a young Frenchman, came to Paris ostensibly to study medicine, but really to stimulate

his highly gifted imagination by contact with all the intellectual life of literature, poetry, music, and drama which Paris could offer ; and no city in the world could offer so much. It was not music as a self-contained art which appealed so strongly to him, but music as the expression of poetic feeling. When he read a poem, a novel or a play, he instantly began to think about it in musical terms, not so much with a view to setting the words to music as in order to translate its feeling into music. His earliest works show this. There are eight scenes from *Faust*, distinct from the later *Damnation de Faust*, and overtures for orchestra called 'Les Francs-Juges', 'Waverley', and 'Le Roi Lear'.

When he wrote a symphony, which he did almost contemporaneously with these early works, it was not merely a symphony in C but a 'Symphonie fantastique' described as 'an episode in the life of an artist', in which every movement illustrated a story of a young artist's love and longing, ambition and disappointment; a violent business in which the artist saw himself marched to the scaffold and his dreams mocked in a horrible demons' dance.

When you come across the 'Symphonie fantastique' and read its 'programme' and all that it is meant to imply, the first idea is that Berlioz was a young man of exceedingly disordered mind, if not actually on the verge of insanity. But that idea vanishes if you see the 'Symphonie fantastique' in relation to his other work. True, here and elsewhere, a love of what is wild and extravagant crops up, but that is only incidental. Look through his works and see the part that great poets, especially Shakespeare and Goethe, played in providing him with high romantic themes, and the morbid excitement of such a thing as the 'Symphonie fantastique' is seen to be only one phase of his work and one which he outgrew in later years.

But it was not only that music meant nothing to Berlioz apart from some literary idea ; to him musical sounds and especially qualities of sound actually expressed these ideas. In the 'Symphonie fantastique' there is a melody which he calls 'l'idée fixe'. It is supposed to represent the ideally beautiful dream of the artist when it is first played smoothly by violin and flute in unison. Later, when he wants to picture the

caricature of the artist's dream in the witches' dance this tune is transformed to a jerky rhythm (six-eight time) and played by the sharp-sounding small clarinet in E flat. In his *Treatise on Instrumentation*, a book which has become the standard work on the subject, he mentions this passage and says that he used this particular instrument in order to 'parody, degrade and blackguardize the melody'.<sup>1</sup>

That tone qualities represented the most definite ideas to Berlioz's mind is shown in many instances. He became entranced and raised to an extraordinary pitch of enthusiasm by such tones. His autobiography as well as his *Treatise* give examples of this, and sometimes his own sense of humour, which was as strong as Rossini's, is turned upon himself in the Autobiography. He tells how he was going home dreaming of the wonderful effect of brass instruments in his first big orchestral work, the overture 'Les Francs-Juges', and so rapt was he that he slipped and sprained his ankle. 'For a long time afterwards', he said, 'that passage gave me a pain in my ankle when I heard it; now it gives me a pain in my head.' Of the same work he says, however, and this is important:

'Neither of my masters (Lesueur or Reicha) taught me anything about instrumentation. It was by studying the methods of the three modern masters, Beethoven, Weber and Spontini; by an impartial examination of the regular forms of instrumentation and of unusual forms and combinations; partly by listening to artists and getting them to make experiments for me, and partly by instinct that I acquired the knowledge I possess.'<sup>2</sup>

Strange though Berlioz's canonization of Beethoven, Weber, and Spontini as 'the three modern masters' may seem to us, it must have seemed even stranger to his contemporaries, but for opposite reasons. While his enthusiasm for Beethoven seems only natural to us and we can well understand Weber finding a second place, the idea of Spontini in that hierarchy seems almost laughable. But the average musician of Paris in 1830 would have accepted Spontini alone of the three, would

<sup>1</sup> This and other quotations from Berlioz's *Instrumentation* are taken from the English translation by Mary Cowden Clarke, published by Novello & Co.

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography of Hector Berlioz*, English translation, vol. i, p. 58.

have kept his laugh for the name of Beethoven, and knew about as much of Weber as the average musician of to-day knows of Spontini. It was in 1827 that Berlioz insisted upon his master, Lesueur, going with him to hear Beethoven's symphony in C minor for the first time.

Through the years of his studentship at the Conservatoire and those following, when he was formulating his own ideals in his first overtures and the 'Symphonie fantastique', Berlioz was at war with all the accepted canons of music. Life for him at this time was a struggle both physically, for he was hard put to it to find means of livelihood, and spiritually, for nothing would induce him to abandon those artistic ideals which were vital to him, though his masters and contemporaries could see nothing in them but the wilful eccentricity of an hysterical youth.

#### BERLIOZ'S CAREER

Berlioz's career falls conveniently into periods from which it is easy to remember a summary of its main facts. The first period came to an end in 1830, when, after several attempts, he gained the *Prix de Rome*. This prize, won by the composition of a cantata, was and is a travelling scholarship from the Paris Conservatoire to Italy. Its chief usefulness to Berlioz was the respite it gave from the difficulties of his life in Paris, and the experience of Italy to an artist of his intensely pictorial disposition was necessarily a great acquisition. Nevertheless, he was too restless to use the opportunity to the full, and contrary to the rules of the prize he was back in Paris with more compositions and more schemes before the time of his journey was expired.

The next ten years are the time of Berlioz's greatest output in orchestral composition, and also the time in which he ultimately proved his right to be considered a great master of the orchestra. Between 1832 and 1842 he composed three more symphonies, and each one of them was founded, like the 'Symphonie fantastique', on literary ideas.

The 'Harold in Italy' symphony is the one most like the 'Symphonie fantastique' in general idea and form. Its move-

ments, though written in the sequence of an ordinary symphony, are all given titles to describe their intention. The first, an *adagio* leading to an *allegro*, is called 'Harold on the mountains', 'Scenes of sadness, of happiness, and of joy'. A march of pilgrims singing their evening prayer and the serenade of the mountaineer to his mistress take the places of slow movement and *scherzo*, and the 'orgy of brigands', which is the *finale*, shows that Berlioz had not even by this date quite outgrown that love of sensationalism which produced 'the witches' dance' in the earlier symphony. In the 'Harold' symphony, too, the carrying on of themes from one movement to another is continued, and most of the ideas of the first three movements are at least recalled in the introduction to the last. This may have been due partly to the direct influence of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, but it was also partly the outcome of the fact that Berlioz's association of melodies with ideas outside music made him inclined to use them as though they were actual words.

The 'Harold in Italy' symphony has a solo viola part which was written for no less a person than Paganini, who wished for a concerto for viola. It was not, however, very likely to appeal to a virtuoso, for Berlioz was incapable of writing a work for the display of a solo instrument, and the viola part really takes a very modest place in the middle of a score filled with all kinds of complex instrumental colour.

The other two symphonies are very different. The 'Symphonie funèbre et triomphale' was written in 1840 for the burial of the heroes of the revolution, and is a tremendous score for wind instruments to which strings are merely added *ad libitum*. This is because it was written for open-air performance, and its music, therefore, is planned on very broad lines, and has practically none of the subtleties of Berlioz's more normal style of instrumentation. But the third, 'Roméo et Juliette', described as a 'Symphonie dramatique', is the greatest of Berlioz's works to which he gave the name of symphony, and the least like a symphony in the normal acceptation of the term. In form it is a curious mixture of the cantata and the symphonic poem. Solo and choral voices are introduced, but rather in order to give some explanation

of the musical intention than dramatically. The orchestra is throughout the main means of expression.

It was with the production of these works that Berlioz at last reached to a recognized position in Paris, and almost immediately upon his success he began to look for means to carry his work further. The mention of the year 1840 is the moment to recall the effect of Berlioz upon Wagner. Wagner had reached Paris in September 1839 in time to hear the first performance of 'Roméo et Juliette', and in the next year performances of the 'Symphonie fantastique', 'Harold', and the great performance of the 'Symphonie funèbre' with parts of the 'Requiem' held on November 1, 1840. He therefore came just in time to see Berlioz's triumph, while he himself was going through much the same state of mental disturbance, struggle, and disappointment through which Berlioz had fought his way nearly twenty years before. In that year Wagner finished *Rienzi* and composed a 'Faust' overture. *The Flying Dutchman*, his first great opera, was still only forming itself in his mind. That Berlioz's extraordinary skill in wielding the orchestra had the greatest effect upon Wagner is clear in spite of the fact that the two were very far from complete sympathy with one another. There are various passages in Wagner's writings in which he tries to explain the mixture of feelings with which he regarded Berlioz. But he never tries to explain away Berlioz's genius for the orchestra. On the other hand, it is not surprising that Berlioz was not very impressed at this time by what little of Wagner's work he had the opportunity of hearing. When Wagner secured a performance of his overture 'Columbus' Berlioz was present, and Wagner looked anxiously for a word of encouragement from him, but got no more than a remark that it was hard to excel in Paris, a fact which they both had full opportunity of realizing. Both were in Paris or its neighbourhood through 1841, and in 1842 Berlioz started upon a long tour of travel to conduct his own works in most of the principal towns of Germany. Curiously enough, they were to meet again soon, for Wagner secured his appointment as conductor at Dresden at the beginning of 1843, and almost simultaneously

Berlioz arrived at Dresden in the course of his tour, and one of the first duties of the new conductor was to help in the study of the 'Symphonie fantastique', the overture 'King Lear', and parts of the 'Requiem' (see pp. 106 and 107).

The period of Berlioz's travel began at Brussels in September, 1842, and was continued until 1848. He not only carried his music all over Germany, but in 1845 he visited Austria, a visit which accounts for his strange introduction of the 'Marche Hongroise' into *La Damnation de Faust* (Berlioz could never resist the fascination of local colour). He next carried his music to Russia, where he was hailed as an apostle of new art by the young composers of the new Russian school (see p. 170). In his autobiography, a book which is as unreliable as to dates and such-like matters of fact as it is delightful as a picture of his own mind and experiences, there are very full accounts of the state of the orchestras which he met, particularly in Germany. He wrote a racy account to Liszt of a rehearsal in a German country town, in which he describes all the excuses of the late-comers and the innumerable details which he had to insist upon and correct.

Berlioz supposes that he has stopped the orchestra and is upbraiding the drummer. He says, 'You are using wooden sticks and you ought to have them with sponge-heads. It is all the difference between black and white'. The Kapellmeister answers, 'We don't know what you call sponge-heads, we have never seen them'. Berlioz: 'I guessed as much, so I have brought some from Paris with me; take the pair that I have put on the table.'

This is a very good illustration of Berlioz's insistence upon the niceties of tone which were simply disregarded by the rough-and-ready methods of the ordinary orchestra before his day. In the *Treatise on Instrumentation* he describes carefully the different qualities produced by different kinds of drum-sticks: (1) wooden ends—very hard and dry; (2) leather ends—less startling, but still hard; (3) sponge-ends, which produce 'grave, velvety quality'. What Beethoven began in treating the drum as a serious musical instrument (see Part II, pp. 169, 171) Berlioz developed in his compositions, and insisted upon, when he carried his music all over Europe.

In this he was doing his greatest service to the progress of musical art, and it was after these tours that he summed up all his experience of instrumental writing, performance, and conducting in the *Treatise on Instrumentation* to which we have alluded.

After this period he had still much to do ; he composed big works, such as his one oratorio *L'Enfance du Christ*, the 'Te Deum' composed for the Paris Exhibition of 1855, and his last opera *Les Troyens*. There were also frequent visits to England when he conducted the New Philharmonic Society and shocked people by his orchestral demands, but all this was comparatively of secondary importance. Of course, he continued to be misunderstood by many to the end of his life ; there was a famous cartoon in *Punch* of a gentleman emerging from a concert-hall dazed and deafened, and explaining that he had been hearing the work of M. Berlioz, and even to-day there are those who still think that the chief aim of Berlioz's large orchestra was to create the biggest amount of noise possible. But the marvels of Berlioz's orchestration are not the *fortissimi* of the full orchestra ; they come from his power of putting every instrument in such a place that its tone tells, and the tellingness is most apparent when he is using few instruments, as he very often does through long passages. The 'Queen Mab' *scherzo* in 'Roméo et Juliette' is a most brilliant example of his art in this respect. The harmonics on violins and harps, the delicate touches on wood wind instruments and horns, the *pianissimo* rhythms for the drums, all contribute ; there is only one *fortissimo* in a score of some sixty pages, and that *fortissimo* is produced without the help of any brass instruments save the horns. The whole effect depends upon the perfection of the playing, and that is so true of most of Berlioz as to account for the fact that his music is beloved by great conductors far more than by the general public.

#### PROGRAMME MUSIC

As Berlioz's orchestration was a revelation to Wagner, so his other ideas about music bore fruit elsewhere. The fact that he always thought of music in connexion with some human

story or mental picture fostered the idea of 'programme' music as opposed to music which exists, so to speak, in its own right. The idea of 'programme music' was no new thing. Couperin in France, Kuhnau in Germany, had worked upon it a hundred years before Berlioz was born (see Part I, pp. 75 and 92); J. S. Bach was strongly attracted by it, especially by the idea of associating a certain figure of melody with a certain state of feeling; and in a more general way both Haydn, in the titles which he gave to some of his symphonies (see Part II, p. 105), and Beethoven, in the Pastoral Symphony (see Part II, p. 158), had been drawn to it. But the mere fact of whether a work is given a descriptive title or not does not make the distinction between 'programme' and 'absolute' music. We might say that every genuine piece of music has the elements of both in it. No real musical composition can be so entirely isolated that it can be separated from the composer's life; the scenes he has passed through, the people he has known, the joys and sorrows which have made him the man he is, the books which he has read, and even the games he has played, all have their influence on his work.

On the other hand, it is only when some particular influence stamps itself upon his work so strongly that unless you know what it was you can hardly sympathize with the shape and colour of his music that it becomes what we call 'programme' music, that is, music which needs some explanation beyond itself. Berlioz was the first composer with whom this was constantly the case, and the first who adapted to this end all his means of expression, the form of each work, its melodic and harmonic shape and the tones of the instruments uttering it.

After him came Liszt, whose symphonic poems carried further the principle of using musical ideas, melodies, and harmonies as though they were words which meant things instead of sounds which express feelings. This sometimes carried music in a wrong direction, and Liszt in his symphonic poems for orchestra and in the piano pieces such as the 'Années de Pèlerinage' gives some instances of the wrong direction. He and others like him could be content with musical ideas which were inexpressive because they meant something

outside the actual music. Such a contentment is the abuse of programme music.

A sketch of Liszt's extraordinary career will help us to understand both his weakness and his strength, and that must be done in connexion with his own instrument, the piano.

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III

[This chapter cannot be illustrated in any practical way without the help of orchestral instruments. A harpist, an oboe player, and a horn player who can be induced to show the capabilities of their instruments will be able to make clear in five minutes principles of construction which are hinted at in the first part of the chapter.]

1. The miniature scores of a few of Berlioz's works, the 'Symphonie fantastique', 'Roméo et Juliette', should be used to point out peculiarities in his treatment of the instruments, e.g. the double basses playing chords, the drum effects, the intricate writing for horns.

2. The horn melody in the overture to *Der Freischütz* should be played from the score, showing how it is distributed over the instruments in different keys.

3. Berlioz's *Treatise on Instrumentation* (English translation, Novello & Co.) gives innumerable examples of the treatment of the several instruments, some of which may be played.

### BOOKS OF REFERENCE

*Autograph of Hector Berlioz.* English translation.

[Gives a vivid picture of personal character and includes letters written on foreign tours. It is not reliable on points of fact.]

*Studies in Modern Music*, by W. H. Hadow. (Seeley & Co.)

*Musical Studies*, by Ernest Newman. (John Lane.)

[Both contain careful studies of Berlioz and his music, and their contrasts of view are mutually corrective.]

*Orchestration*, by Cecil Forsyth. (Macmillan.)

[The most complete modern treatise on the instruments of the orchestra in the English language.]

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PIANO AND ITS COMPOSERS

WE have described three new directions towards which music spread its branches at the very outset of the last century: (1) national opera, realized in Weber's *Der Freischütz*; (2) the union of music and poetry in song, achieved by Schubert; (3) the complete adaptation of Berlioz's orchestra to suggest or illustrate poetic ideas in the symphonic poem or kindred forms. All three of them show the musician striving to join hands with his fellow artists, to share in their life and thought instead of remaining aloof. While this was a gain so great that it is impossible to overstate its importance, we have just hinted that it was and is possible to abuse it. Let the musician breathe in poetry and literature and drama and be filled with a sympathetic appreciation of all the joys and woes and struggles of humanity; it is music, however, that he has got to breathe out, and music has a life of its own which must never be lessened by its contact with other and more transient life.

We are about to see that with all this change and ferment in artistic ideals music in the works of the great masters of the nineteenth century did maintain its identity. Though it sometimes looked as though it might become merely the handmaid to poetry or be swallowed up in a 'union of all the arts', it outgrew all such temporary dangers. It emerged enriched, strengthened, and humanized by its experiences, but still itself.

An instrument which had the greatest influence in keeping to the fore the distinctions which separate music from its sister arts was that most familiar of all instruments, the piano. The modern piano was just perfected, just ready to the hand of the composer when those composers who were born in the first decade of the century were growing up. Those among them who made the

piano their daily companion, who expressed themselves most fully by its means, were the men who had the clearest idea of the independent life of music. Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, and a little later Brahms, are four salient examples of this, and in the opposite scale we have to put one, but that an exceedingly powerful example to the contrary, Liszt.

Let us look first at the great exception, the case of FRANZ LISZT, who was probably the most wonderful pianist that the world has ever seen, and yet who in his later years became the strongest advocate of descriptive and illustrative music.

His career is one of the most fascinating interest ; in his character a noble generosity towards his brother artists was contrasted with an invincible egotism in some of the private relations of life. His gifts were so brilliant that, having reached the summit of attainment as a public pianist in early years, he could put that career aside altogether and devote himself for years to conducting and organizing the music of a small town, Weimar, in such a way that its opera and its concerts became the centre of all the most modern musical developments. He could turn from executive work of this kind to the composition of works ranging from the huge 'programme' symphonies on Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *Faust*, symphonic poems for orchestra, and oratorios and church music on a grand scale, to piano pieces involving the most brilliant technical qualities, and songs, a few of which, especially when he chose the French language as his text, are exquisite in every detail. His arrangements of music for the piano covered an extraordinary range of choice. There was scarcely a popular opera, from Donizetti's *Lucia* to Wagner's *Meistersinger*, of which he did not make a 'paraphrase' or transcription for the piano. The symphonies of Beethoven and Schubert and the songs of the latter, even Berlioz's 'Symphonie fantastique' and Weber's overtures, were helped towards their recognition by the public through his piano arrangements, and the energetic dances of Hungary, his native land, were made known to musicians all over the world through his rhapsodies.

Moreover, there was scarcely a musician of eminence who did not at some time or other feel the benefit of Liszt's personal

friendship and his championship before the public. Since he gained a European reputation as a pianist at a very early age he was able to exercise a unique influence in these directions. He was eight years younger than Berlioz, yet when the 'Symphonie fantastique' was first heard in Paris in 1830 the sight of Liszt applauding the work amongst the audience was the greatest sign of encouragement which Berlioz got. Liszt's performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* at Weimar at a later date showed that after all Wagner's work was not to be put aside; he was among the first to recognize the genius of Brahms, and he held out a hand of friendship to César Franck when Franck's contemporaries in Paris despised him for a pedant.

One could go on multiplying the instances of Liszt's penetration, and it would be pleasanter to do so than to remember that there was another side. But since that other side affected his own composition very seriously we cannot quite ignore it. For the fact is that his temperament, responding early to that sort of applause and adulation which unthinking people shower upon public performers, became so much addicted to it that in almost all his music the effect of the moment is the prime consideration. The piano for him was not the instrument for intimate reflection, but a means of public oratory. It could be oratory of a very fine kind, but the point is that his music was essentially addressed to an audience and was not the confession of a personal faith.

There are many people living who well remember Liszt's playing and can give you first-hand accounts of it, for although he rarely played in public in later life, he did play in London in the very last year of his life (1886), when he was received with overwhelming enthusiasm. One short quotation will serve here to suggest his extraordinary power of interpretation, and since the occasion described was not a great public function but a 'semi-private gathering' in Leipzig in the early 'seventies, it is likely to be the more accurate.

'In one bar the immeasurable gap between him and all other pianists showed itself in a flash; he was the very reverse of all my anticipations, which inclined me, perhaps from the carica-

tures familiar to me in my boyhood, to expect to see an inspired acrobat. When I heard the amazing tone and colour he produced, without a theatrical gesture, sitting like a rock at the instrument, full of dignity and composure, I and my rather punctilioius companion were so carried away that we waited at the door to cap him as he came out.'<sup>1</sup>

This will show why Liszt was an exception among the great composers upon whom the piano exercised the strongest influence; for him the piano was primarily the means of expression; for Mendelssohn, Schumann, and even Chopin it was primarily the means of registering impressions.

Before we study their piano music and its effect upon the art in general we must look rather closely into the circumstances of their lives and both compare and contrast them. These three were the closest contemporaries not only in the beginning but in the end. Liszt, who was two years younger than Mendelssohn and lived until 1886, saw and took part in all the big musical developments of the century, culminating in the production of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in 1882. Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, on the other hand, all belong entirely to the first half of the century, for Mendelssohn died in 1847, Chopin survived him by only two years, and though Schumann lived till 1856, his last years were so clouded by illness and mental collapse that his active life was very little longer than that of the other two.

#### MENDELSSOHN AND SCHUMANN

In the early lives of the two German-born members of this trio, Mendelssohn and Schumann, we have a contrast not unlike those which we drew between Handel and Bach (Part I, Chapter IV) and Mozart and Haydn (Part II, Chapter III).

JAKOB LUDWIG FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY was born at Hamburg on February 3, 1809, the eldest son of Abraham Mendelssohn, a Jewish banker, who, like so many of his race, was not only commercially prosperous but a man of cultivation who possessed a keen interest in art and literature. Abraham's father, Moses Mendelssohn, had acquired some fame as a scholar.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Stanford, in an article 'Reminiscences of Leipzig, 1874-5', contributed to the *R.C.M. Magazine*, vol. viii, no. 1.

In the early years of Felix's life the family moved from Hamburg to Berlin, where the father founded a well-known banking firm, and there the family, four in number, amongst whom the eldest sister, Fanny, is most important for her constant companionship with Felix, was brought up. Notice, as an indication of how very close together our musical dates lie, that Mendelssohn was born just four months before Haydn died (see Part II, p. 56), and that this was the year in which Beethoven wrote the 'Emperor' concerto (see Part II, p. 158).

When Felix was seven years old (1816) his father was sent to Paris on business connected with the war indemnity which France had to pay to Prussia as a result of the Waterloo campaign, and since he took his family with him and Felix began his education as a pianist there, this visit was in a sense the beginning of his cosmopolitan musical career. Mendelssohn's father was not, like Handel's, anxious to keep his boy away from music, nor, like Mozart's, was he anxious to thrust him into it. There was never any question either of thwarting his artistic inclinations or of exhibiting him as an infant prodigy, but from the first it was determined to educate and develop every side of his character, and when eventually it appeared that in spite of brilliant abilities in many directions music was the strongest thing in him, music was allowed to become his life.

One hears of him playing the piano at a concert in Berlin when he was only nine years old, but such public appearances were only occasional. We hear much more of the quiet music-makings in the Mendelssohns' home, of Felix's early compositions, which began when he was about eleven years old, of the musical parties held at home on Sunday mornings at which many famous musicians congregated, and where Felix's boyish works were played and discussed and placed beside the mature works of great masters. Along with all this, general education, especially the knowledge of classical literature, Greek and Latin, was carried on, and the life was varied by a certain amount of travel, including a tour in Switzerland and a visit to Weimar, where Mendelssohn met Goethe and played to him. All these experiences were seized upon with vivid responsiveness by

Mendelssohn. That is perhaps the most salient feature of his character; everything had interest for him; he sketched the scenery of Switzerland in water-colours; he found music for the poetry of Goethe, and from time to time in the intervals of his busy life he produced elegant translations of classic poetry. Experiences appealed to him more vividly than deeply. Wherever he met with sympathy he was at his best, but his life had to be lived in the sunshine.

Both the outward circumstances and these qualities of temperament give us the measure for the contrast between him and Schumann.

ROBERT SCHUMANN was more than a year younger than Mendelssohn. The son of a bookseller in the small Saxon town of Zwickau, he was born on June 8, 1810. His father's was a typical example of the old German life of the middle classes. Himself the son of a clergyman, he lived amongst his books, and knew them not only as objects for sale, but in their contents as well. Robert was brought up on books, and formed his own tastes by browsing amongst his father's collection, but music was not amongst the interests immediately put before him. Yet it was so strongly ingrained in him that he was early allowed some lessons from the town organist, and when Weber was appointed Kapellmeister at Dresden the father took steps to try to procure him as a teacher for his son, though Robert was then only seven years old, and the distance between Zwickau and Dresden, some forty miles, was not as easily traversed then as now. Perhaps on this account the project fell through, and the only big experience which came in Schumann's way as a child was a visit to Karlsbad, when at the age of nine he heard Moscheles play the piano and was even then deeply impressed by the event. In the next year he entered the Gymnasium at Zwickau, where his school studies were continued for eight years, during which time music fell into the background.

If we compare Mendelssohn and Schumann in the year 1826 we see at once the great difference in the speed of their development. By this date Mendelssohn had composed several of

the works by which he is known to-day; among them is the Symphony in C minor, No. 1, the Capriccio in F sharp minor, Op. 5 for piano, the trumpet overture for orchestra, the String Quintet in A, Op. 18; and in the summer of this year, when he entered the university of Berlin, one of the most brilliant of his orchestral works was written, the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Schumann, on the other hand, had practically nothing to show as a composer. He was still at school, and the only indication of his literary gifts is the fact that he had contributed to his father's publication called *Bildergalerie der berühmtesten Menschen aller Völker und Zeiten* (A picture gallery of the most famous men of all peoples and times). In this year his father died, and his mother, who became his guardian, was much less inclined to consider his artistic proclivities. In the following year he began setting some of his own poems to music, and it was then that he formed his lifelong devotion to romantic poetry and literature, especially to the works of Byron and of Jean Paul Richter. Schumann was nearly eighteen when he matriculated at the university of Leipzig, and before joining the university he was allowed a tour in Bavaria, during which, at Munich, he met Heine, and paid a visit to Bayreuth in order to meet the widow of his hero, Jean Paul Richter. It was at Leipzig that his musical life really began. Curiously enough, his university studies were to be devoted to the law. There seems to be some sort of fate by which parents try to distract their children from music by turning them into lawyers, and the attempt has the result of driving them to a decision. Handel and Schumann are conspicuous instances.

The choice of Leipzig as the scene of his legal studies was an exceedingly rash one, for nowhere in Germany was there so much musical distraction. Almost at once Schumann made friends with the musical circle of Leipzig, amongst whom Friedrich Wieck, pianist and teacher, was a leader. To him Schumann went for piano lessons, and there he met not only the musicians of Leipzig and the musical visitors to the town, but Wieck's little daughter Clara, then a child of nine years old, who was

already beginning her training under her father as a pianist. In the following year the mistake of choosing Leipzig was realized, and Schumann was dispatched to Heidelberg, but without producing the desired change in his interests. At Heidelberg he still worked diligently at the piano and still neglected the law, and in 1830 the situation had become so acute that Wieck was called upon to decide between Schumann and his mother, music and the law. The decision eventually was passed in Schumann's favour, and in the summer he left Heidelberg for Leipzig and music study under Wieck.

It was then that his misdirected enthusiasm for perfecting his technique led him to improvise physical exercises which ended in disaster. He permanently strained his right hand, so that his hope of becoming a public pianist was shattered. At first the accident seemed disastrous to his career, but it was soon turned to advantage; instead of studying the gymnastics of the hand, Schumann took up his pen and began to compose vigorously. The variations on the letters of the name ABEGG were his Opus I, and the choice of the theme records the name of a young lady for whom at the age of twenty-one he had a passing enthusiasm. He was spending the winter of 1832 at home at Zwickau when Clara was brought there to give an orchestral concert. One movement of an early symphony by Schumann was included in the programme, and in the following year various compositions for piano appeared, namely, the 'Papillons', 'Impromptus for the piano on a romance by Clara Wieck', the sonatas in G minor and F sharp minor, and the Toccata in C, Op. 7.

The record of these years, 1828 to 1832, is still a small one when placed beside Mendelssohn's activities during the same time. Schumann's travels between Leipzig, Heidelberg, and Zwickau are varied only by a holiday trip to North Italy in 1829.

#### MENDELSSOHN'S TRAVELS

In the same year Mendelssohn made his first momentous visit to England, and though this was nominally planned as a 'Wanderjahr' it was the beginning of his professional career.

He reached London on April 21, where he was received by Moscheles, whose reputation as a pianist was at its height in this country. He lodged first at a house in Great Portland Street, at the corner of Ridinghouse Street, a spot which all musicians of this day know well from its nearness to Queen's Hall, though the house itself has been pulled down. At the introduction of Moscheles, he was invited to conduct his symphony in C minor at the Philharmonic Concert; he was received everywhere, plunged with enthusiasm into all the events of a London musical season and captivated every one by his brilliancy and charm. When the season was over he started upon a tour through England and Scotland. He visited Holyrood, where he made a sketch for his Scotch symphony. He went on to the Hebrides, and the visit produced the first impressions which eventually resulted in the delightful Hebrides overture. The west coast, Ireland, and Wales were all visited. He stayed in country houses and delighted in all the pleasures of English country life, returning to Germany in November. In the next year, 1830, his journeys took a different course; he went in the summer to Nürnberg and Munich, and thence through the Salzkammergut to Vienna. In October he saw Venice for the first time; he spent the winter in Rome, and in the spring of 1831 he wandered through the region of the Italian lakes, walked over the mountains to Interlaken, and finally arrived at Grindelwald. Even then his travels were not over; he stayed some time in Switzerland writing the Scotch and Italian symphonies and the Hebrides overture, then returned to Munich, where the piano concerto in G minor was written for a concert, and passing through the towns of South Germany he arrived before the end of 1831 in Paris, which he then visited for the third time. There he found many musicians, among them Chopin, Liszt, Meyerbeer the composer of innumerable operas, and Habeneck the conductor, who was Berlioz's arch-enemy. But Paris was not congenial to Mendelssohn, and in the spring of 1832 he left it for his second visit to London, where again he was received with open arms, and made his chief public appearances at the concerts of the Philharmonic Society. One of the

fruits of this visit was the publication with Novello of the first book of 'Songs without Words', at first called only 'Original Melodies for the Piano.'

Many of the places which Mendelssohn visited saw little or nothing of him as a musician. Italy and Scotland contributed impressions from the beauty of their scenery which found their way into his music. But in the chief towns of Germany, to some extent in Paris, and most of all in London, he was recognized as a performer and a composer of the first rank; and in 1833 the seal was set upon his abilities, first by the invitation to conduct the famous Lower Rhine Festival, held that year at Düsseldorf, and afterwards by the appointment for three years of musical director at Düsseldorf, an appointment which required him to settle there in the autumn.

So at the age of twenty-four we find Mendelssohn established as a musician of European reputation, while Schumann, living quietly at Leipzig, is producing works for the piano and seizing on the few opportunities for performance which the concerts of his personal friends afforded. One more year remains to be mentioned before the eventful one in which Mendelssohn and Schumann came together for the first time in Leipzig. In 1834 Mendelssohn's activities included the conducting of the Lower Rhine Festival, this time at Aix-la-Chapelle, where again he met Chopin, and the beginning of the composition of his first oratorio, *St. Paul*.

The year was hardly less eventful for Schumann in a more quiet way, for in the spring his desire to express himself fully both in music and in words led him to make a great venture—he founded the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Musical Journal), with himself, Wieck, and two other musicians as editors. A journal entirely devoted to the discussion of musical subjects was then a comparatively new thing, and Schumann's way of treating musical subjects was absolutely new. His writings were no cut-and-dried, didactic criticism. An immense enthusiasm for everything real, new, and daring appeared in his writing about music as fully as in his own composition. A love of the picturesque and of making stories of everything connected with his life and his art

came out as fully in his articles as in his music for the piano. He imagined the existence of a society which he called the 'Davidsbündler', a group of young artists who, strong and vigorous like David in the Bible story, slung their stones at the false giant of the Philistines. Everything which was dull, pedantic, or pretentious in art was represented by the Philistines, and one David was not enough to overthrow them. He would write first under one signature, then under another ; Florestan and Eusebius, whom we know in the delightful pieces called 'Le Carnaval', which he wrote in this year, were his two favourite pseudonyms. And his musical friends were described under other names and enrolled in the society whose views the *Neue Zeitschrift* represented.

All this, with musical composition, brought Schumann for the first time into the full tide of his powers, and in 1835 he had become sole editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift*, when Mendelssohn was offered the conductorship of the famous 'Gewandhaus' concerts in Leipzig. Mendelssohn came in the autumn, and one of the first events of his reception was most naturally an evening spent at the house of Wieck on the night of his first concert at the Gewandhaus (October 4). Schumann, of course, was a member of the party, and, though that was not actually their first meeting, the evening marks the beginning of their firm and lasting friendship. It was at first rather one-sided. It was only natural that Schumann should sit at the feet of the brilliant director of the Gewandhaus, whose performances of Beethoven's fourth symphony and his own 'Meeresstille' overture had won the hearts of the people of Leipzig on this first memorable evening. It was equally natural that Mendelssohn, who had mixed with all the great artists of Europe, should see in Schumann only a young man who had written some promising piano music. Also, the fact that Schumann was editor of a musical paper was not immediately a recommendation to Mendelssohn's friendship. He had no more fondness for criticism than most composers have. Mendelssohn was sparkling and animated in company ; Schumann was quiet and reserved. It necessarily took some time for them to understand one

another equally, since Schumann was immeasurably the greater in his powers of understanding.

#### CHOPIN'S EARLY CAREER

We have already mentioned Chopin's chance meetings with Mendelssohn, and since he too came to Leipzig at this time and was received into this circle of friends, we may here look back to see what his career had been up to this point.

FRANÇOIS FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN was just three months older than Robert Schumann. He was born on March 1, 1810. His birthplace, Zelazowa Wola, is about twenty miles from Warsaw, but though he was a Pole by birth he was of French extraction, for his father was a native of Nancy who had settled in Poland as a book-keeper in a business house. The circumstances of Chopin's early life were not specially calculated to bring music from him, but the extraordinary aptitude which he showed made his father send him for teaching to the head of the Warsaw Conservatoire. When he was fifteen he played in public part of a piano concerto by Moscheles, perhaps the most technically advanced music of the time, and also published his own first work for piano, the Rondo in C, Op. 1. He was kept at school for two years longer, and on leaving (1827) he produced a very remarkable work, a set of variations for piano with orchestral accompaniment on the theme of the duet 'La ci darem' in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. This with other works, including a piano sonata, Op. 4, a Nocturne, and three Polonaises (published after his death as Op. 71), showed the unusual quality of his genius.

At the very beginning of his career Chopin's writing for the piano is quite different in the character of its melody, its ornament, and its harmony from any other music then existing. He had, so to speak, sprung out of the soil; the scales and cadences and pointed rhythms of Polish national song and dance form one part of his vocabulary, the ornament of the Italian aria style another part. The example of a few writers of piano music, such as John Field (1782-1837), an Irishman who spent much of his life in Russia, suggests certain characteristics of his

form, but no one of these things nor all of them taken together will account for the peculiarly personal character of Chopin's music. And, further, we must notice that that character appears at once; he did not begin by writing works which scarcely represent him as even the greatest Germans did; one may see a certain development in his treatment of form as a whole, but take any single passage of Chopin and it would be hard to say whether he wrote it in the year 1827 or just before his death, little more than twenty years later. With this in mind one can see the justice of Schumann's famous phrase, written in a review of the variations on 'La ci darem', 'Hats off, gentlemen, a genius!'

In 1828 Chopin was given his first journey abroad and taken by a friend who was visiting a Congress of Physicians in Berlin. And that occasion has a musical interest, for Mendelssohn had been invited to compose some music for one of the receptions of the Congress; the 'Meeresstille' overture was the result, and Chopin heard the performance. The following year included a visit to Vienna, where he played the 'La ci darem' variations in public with success, and he also composed the piano Concerto in F minor. In 1830, which was also Mendelssohn's great year of travel, Chopin began in earnest his career as a pianist, and toured through many German towns on his way to Paris. He was at Stuttgart when he heard of the taking of Warsaw by the Russians, and the Étude (Op. 10, No. 12), built on a rushing figure in semiquavers over which a brave melody sweeps forward to a defiant cadence, is his patriotic comment on the event. He settled down in Paris to the career of playing, teaching, and composing, and, as we have seen, it was there that he came across Mendelssohn in person and numbered amongst his friends all the most important musicians of the time from Cherubini, still the head of the Conservatoire, to Berlioz, who had conquered that institution by carrying off the 'Prix de Rome', and Liszt, the only musician of the piano whose fame was able to surpass his own. Chopin as a pianist was primarily the interpreter of his own music, Liszt was the interpreter of all the great music of the world.

Chopin's delicate health made him retire from the career of

a public performer in the year 1835, in which he paid this passing visit to Leipzig, and though in after years he frequently came out of his retirement and paid several visits to England as well as to other places, he definitely turned his back upon the wide public fame to which his gifts entitled him.

#### FRIENDS IN LEIPZIG

The picture which Mendelssohn drew of the evening at Leipzig, during which a performance on the piano of his own recently written oratorio *St. Paul* alternated with the Études and a new concerto by Chopin, 'while inquisitive Leipzigers stole in to listen and to have seen Chopin', gives the contact and the contrast of these two men in a flash. Mendelssohn had the good sense to appreciate the genius of Chopin though it differed widely from his own taste. He adds, 'He solemnly promised to come again in the course of the winter if I would compose a new symphony and perform it in his honour. We agreed to this on oath before three witnesses, and it remains to be seen whether we shall keep our word.' It has been suggested that Schumann, Clara Wieck, and her father may have been the witnesses, though on this point there is no evidence.

Another friendship follows close upon this one, and it is one in which English people have a special interest. William Sterndale Bennett, a young English pianist and composer who, contrary to the tradition of English musicians, had received a good deal of honour in his own country, came to Leipzig in 1836 both to study and to perform, and incidentally to convince the conservatives of Leipzig that the saying, 'Ein englischer Componist—kein Componist' (An English composer—no composer), is sometimes as untrue as are certain other German sayings of to-day (see p. 189). Mendelssohn, who had met Bennett in London, chaperoned him on to the platform of the Gewandhaus to play his own concerto in F minor, and no sooner had Schumann heard him than, with his usual generosity, he was ready to champion the young man and his music through thick and thin. He wrote of him in the *Neue Zeitschrift* with enthusiastic affection, and he dedicated his own splendid 'Études

symphoniques' to 'his friend Sterndale Bennett'. Very soon after his arrival in Germany, Bennett was able to write home, 'I have found a new friend, a man who would be just after your own heart. How I wish you could know him. His name is Robert Schumann.'

A relationship of a still more intimate kind was influencing Schumann's life now. Schumann and Clara Wieck had known one another since he first came as a student to the university and she was a child of nine. She was now just sixteen; carefully trained by her father, she had made more than a local reputation as a pianist, and she had greater qualities than those which one generally associates with what is called 'an infant prodigy'. A fine and serious nature, she was devoted to music and not only to her own performance. Her sympathies went out to every new expression of music, and her own compositions were far from negligible. The expected happened. Schumann was in love with the young artist beside whom he had grown up, and two years later he made his proposal of marriage, to which, however, the father refused his consent. The years between 1835 and 1840 were far from happy ones for Schumann. It is true that Clara returned his love, but marriage was impossible while the father refused his consent, and the difficulty was only settled at last by the result of a painful lawsuit which went in the young people's favour. And yet in these years we get the very best of Schumann's piano music; the 'Kinderszenen' and 'Kreisleriana', the majestic 'Fantasia' in C (Op. 17), the 'Novelletten', and the 'Faschingsschwank aus Wien' all belong to these years, and the name of the last recalls the one other incident of the period which needs to be mentioned. In 1838 Schumann went to Vienna with the hope that he might be able there to carve out a career for himself and provide a home for Clara. It was his wish to transfer the publication of the *Neue Zeitschrift* to Vienna, and he went to discover the possibilities. The project did not result in anything. Viennese musicians did not want Schumann, and Viennese publishers did not want a paper of the kind; but two other things happened. Schumann's admiration for Schubert led him to call on Schubert's brother, who showed him the pile

of manuscripts which had lain undisturbed since Franz's death (see p. 24). Schumann picked out from amongst them the score of the great symphony in C major, and arranged to have it sent to Mendelssohn for performance at Leipzig, from which moment that symphony started upon its career in the world at large.

The other event was Schumann's presence at the carnival in Vienna, which led to the merry musical scenes of the 'Faschings-schwank'. At that time the 'Marseillaise' was forbidden in Vienna, and the prohibition accounts for the amusing way in which Schumann has let a fragment of the tune slip in incidentally among the many melodies of the first movement.

During these years Mendelssohn's career was one succession of public musical events in which he was the central figure. The concerts at Leipzig, the Lower Rhine Festivals, which he conducted year by year, and at which he first produced *St. Paul* in 1836, visits to England (*St. Paul* was given at Birmingham in the following year), the first performance of Schubert's symphony in C at Leipzig in 1839, the composition of the 'Lobgesang' (Hymn of Praise) for a festival at Brunswick in 1840, again produced in England, at Birmingham, in the same year, are the chief events. He had married Mlle Cécile Jeanrenaud in 1837, and in this as in his music it seemed that Mendelssohn's career was as preordained to smoothness as Schumann's was to difficulty.

Schumann's difficulties, however, were conquered at last; he was married to Clara on September 12, 1840, and the happiness of his first years of married life is shown in the wonderful outburst of song-writing which marks a new phase of his development.

#### MENDELSSOHN'S LIFE AND CHARACTER

Curiously enough, almost at this moment Mendelssohn's difficulties began; he was persuaded to give up Leipzig and become director of a new academy at Berlin. It was just the giving up of freedom and the acceptance of control under Royal command which was most irksome to Mendelssohn's nature.

Organization and efficiency were already the watchwords of the Prussian capital, and schemes of education, including the composition of music to various Greek plays, were forced upon Mendelssohn. His music to *Antigone* is the most important result of this part of his career ; during the rest of his life, which lasted only seven years, he was perpetually negotiating to regain his freedom. He did regain it so far as to be able to keep up his connexion with Leipzig, and to secure the establishment of the famous 'Conservatorium' there in 1843 ; and he made flying visits to England, the last of which took place in 1847, when he came to conduct the revised version of *Elijah* at a concert of the Sacred Harmonic Society. The first performance of that work had taken place at Birmingham a year before (1846), on August 26.

On his return from his last visit to England he received the news of the death of his sister Fanny, and this caused a shock from which he never recovered. He had persistently over-worked, had used his marvellous energies to the full in every direction, and when suddenly a severe strain was put upon him he had no reserve of strength to meet it. He was completely broken down, the buoyancy of spirits on which he had lived deserted him, and a holiday in Switzerland did little or nothing to restore him. Though he returned to Leipzig, and began painfully to take up the threads of his work, there was no more spirit in him, and he died suddenly on November 4, 1847.

Nothing shows more strongly the position that Mendelssohn had gained than the widespread consternation which his death produced. It is recorded that in Leipzig it was received not only by musicians but by the townsfolk with that shock which only the death of a great public hero inspires, and in England the sense of bereavement was scarcely less acute. When one thinks of Mozart, carried to his grave in the paupers' quarter of the cemetery at Vienna, and of Beethoven dying practically alone, and only mourned for by a few musicians, the contrast of the funeral procession of Mendelssohn through the streets of Leipzig, and the carrying of the coffin to Berlin for public burial, is poignant. No musician ever received so whole-hearted a response

from his own generation. Perhaps he was given so much that the subsequent generation felt its debt to him less.

In the circumstances of Mendelssohn's early death we see what was the one weakness in his armour. No man is armed at all points, though Mendelssohn seemed to be, so long as life went well with him. He could not, however, bear reverse as strong men bear it, as Schumann and Berlioz, for example, bore it and conquered it many times. His lifelong dislike of Berlin was begun by the criticisms passed upon his boyish opera *Camacho* (1827); Paris did not welcome him as London did, so he conceived a dislike of the French character; he abandoned his work at Düsseldorf suddenly, and as his father, who adored him, confessed 'not without considerable irritability and inconsistency', because the arrangements which he had to make for the operatic performances were irksome. In fact, so many were the opportunities which lay before him that he was never forced to win his way through any uncongenial surroundings; until the time when the King of Prussia caught him and chained him to his chariot wheels at Berlin he was always able to avoid unpleasantness by the simple process of going elsewhere. When he could no longer do this he chafed and wore himself out with work and worry, and when a great sorrow from which there was no escape came upon him he was overwhelmed by it.

This must be noticed because it explains something in his music acknowledged now by all the world. It is not so much a defect as a limitation. It stops short before a certain barrier, which it never passes. We love it for its grace and beauty, admire it for its brilliancy, honour it for its skilful workmanship, but nowhere does it give us that feeling which all the greatest things give us of depth calling unto depth. We have already placed some of his songs beside those of Schubert (see p. 45); we shall find the same stoppage when we place his piano music beside that of Schumann and Chopin, and if we turn to the orchestral music we find Mendelssohn always at his best in moments of gaiety and brightness. The elfin gambols of the overture and scherzo from the music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the sunny glow of the Italian symphony never

fade. Wagner, who was by no means a sympathetic or even always a just critic of Mendelssohn, spoke of him as a 'landscape painter of the first order', and one realizes the truth of this as soon as one places the Italian symphony and the 'Hebrides' overture side by side. Never was there a stronger contrast of atmosphere in the music of one man. The blue sky of Italy and the grey sea washing the northern islands, the vine-clad plains and the stern rocks encircled by the flights of sea-birds, take what images you will to represent the two countries and you will find them typical of the contrasts of melody and orchestral tone existing between these two works. Mendelssohn caught the feeling of a scene or a fairy story unerringly; it was the human story which he could not quite unravel because he could only face it in its more genial moods. Even as one says that one expects to be asked, 'How about *Elijah*; is not that a deep and moving human story?' Certainly it is in a sense, and yet if we look at *Elijah* dispassionately—and it is hard for those who have been brought up on it, as most of us have been, to do so—we find that it is most moving in its representation of dramatic scenes. *Elijah* taunting the prophets of Baal, invoking the storm, receiving the vision on Horeb, and being caught up to heaven in a whirlwind is more inspired than *Elijah* healing the widow's son, declaring his failure in the aria 'It is enough', and receiving comfort from the angel in 'O rest in the Lord'. Mendelssohn poured out music to sacred words in two oratorios, *The Hymn of Praise*, and settings of numerous Psalms, at a time when most of his contemporaries hesitated to commit themselves to such ideas, and perhaps his very confidence is a sign that neither life nor religion represented to him a difficult path. We touch on these points here chiefly to round off our sketch of Mendelssohn's character.

#### SCHUMANN'S LATER LIFE

We left Schumann at the moment of his marriage with an allusion to the songs which immediately followed it. After what has been said of Schumann's songs in Chapter II (see p. 46) it will be understood that the mere ecstasy of happiness is by no

means the only impulse at the back of his songs, though the ecstasy was there ready to burst out in such a song as 'Widmung' (Dedication) or 'Die Rose, die Lilie' (No. 3 of the *Dichterliebe* cycle) whenever the poet gave the signal for it. But in the deep sympathy with all phases of human feeling which is the leading characteristic of Schumann's song, we find the happiness which has come through sorrow and anxiety and has faced things out. Schumann is a disciplined soul in a way that neither Mendelssohn nor Chopin could be. Mendelssohn handled every kind of music at once and was immediately successful in each; Chopin spent his life at his piano discovering one treasure of beauty after another and never needing any other means of expression than the keyboard and his own two hands.

Schumann definitely set himself to extend the range of his art. So far the piano and song had occupied him. In the year 1841 he devoted himself to symphonic music; the symphony in B flat, now called No. 1 since the early symphony in G minor (see p. 76) has disappeared, came early in the year, and that in D minor, now known as No. 4, with an Overture, Scherzo, and Finale, as well as the first movement of the famous piano concerto, were all written at this time.

Next came a period of chamber music, which includes the three string quartets, dedicated to Mendelssohn, the quintet for piano and strings, the quartet for piano and strings, and a trio (1842); and then choral music, including *Paradise and the Peri* and some of the music to *Faust*, was engaged upon.

During these years the only breaks in the round of quiet home life and composition were the tours which Mme Schumann undertook in order to pursue her career as a pianist, and these served also to carry some of her husband's work abroad. One of the most important was a tour to Russia at the beginning of 1844, when the symphony in B flat was performed, and this took place a little before Berlioz made a similar excursion. No two foreigners subsequently had as much influence upon the new Russian school of composers as Berlioz and Schumann, and no two were less alike in character.

But 1844 was also the year in which Schumann's health

began to suffer, and in order to stave off the illness which threatened him the *Neue Zeitschrift* was sold, and he with his wife and family left the many interests of their life at Leipzig to find greater quiet at Dresden. Wagner was now occupying the position of Kapellmeister at the Dresden Opera, and immediately Schumann's many-sided sympathy was turned towards the problems of opera. He was profoundly interested by the production of *Tannhäuser* in 1845, and his own only opera *Genoveva* was the result of his sojourn in Dresden. In 1846 he was well enough to undertake another trip to Vienna. There he conducted the symphony in B flat, and an episode of Mozart's experience was repeated in Schumann's case, for that symphony was first coldly received in Vienna, then warmly applauded in Prague (Part II, p. 51). In the same year another symphony made its appearance, No. 2 in C, and the production of this at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig was the last important service which Mendelssohn was able to do for his friend. He conducted it on November 5, exactly a year before he died.

The year 1849 was the centenary of Goethe's birth ; it was also the year of the revolution, for his part in which Wagner was banished from Germany. Both events are marked in Schumann's career. The first was the occasion for the performance of his music to *Faust* in Dresden, Leipzig, and Weimar ; the second caused him to leave Dresden, not as a fugitive from the law, like Wagner, but in order to avoid the disturbances which the revolutionists were creating there.

In this year, too, Chopin died after a life of wandering, of illness, of transient happinesses, followed by disillusionments and disappointments. Of the three whose lives we set out to trace Schumann alone remains in 1850, and the last years of his life are years of decline. It was in this year that he accepted the position of musical director at Düsseldorf, which Mendelssohn had held years before, and wrote the splendid symphony in E flat called the 'Rhenish' for the Lower Rhine Festival. The name of the symphony is more than a mere compliment to the festival. The music reflects Schumann's impressions of the Rhine country, and one movement pictures the pageant of

a great service in Cologne Cathedral. It recalls the sixth of the 'Dichterliebe' songs in its majestically moving bass and its cumulative harmonies.

But though Schumann took up these new duties with enthusiasm he was not successful in them. He had none of that love of orchestral detail which made the mere handling of an orchestra a joy to Berlioz, nor had he the quick precision and untiring energy which gave Mendelssohn his success as a conductor. The minutiae of rehearsals and the publicity of performances were alike painful to Schumann's retiring nature, and when a conductor feels distaste it is quickly felt by the players.

Schumann had lost one near friend in Mendelssohn but had found another in the young violinist, Joseph Joachim, who had studied under Mendelssohn's guidance at Leipzig, and who in these years was in close sympathy with the Schumanns. For a time Joachim was leader of the orchestra at Weimar under Liszt, but all his musical ideals were far more nearly allied to those of Schumann, who, now that Mendelssohn had died, seemed the composer most able to uphold the idea of music as an art independent of associations with other arts.

The time at Düsseldorf was broken by a visit to Leipzig in the early spring of 1852, and the fact that this visit was the occasion of a festival of Schumann's own music shows how thoroughly his position as a composer was now recognized. Both Joachim and Liszt were present to help in the celebration, and the whole occasion was one of the brightest events in Schumann's musical career. Ill health was gaining upon him, and his dissatisfaction with his work at Düsseldorf helped to increase the melancholy which now began to cloud his life. In the autumn of 1853 occurred the last incident in Schumann's life which was of wide public importance: a young man came to his house with an introduction from Joachim and a portfolio of music. A piano sonata, some songs and chamber music were in the portfolio, and when these were taken out and played their remarkable qualities, as well as the evident strength of character which their composer showed, so impressed Schumann that for the first time for nearly ten years he undertook the writing of

a critical article in their praise. The young man was Johannes Brahms ; the sonata and the songs were those now known as Opp. 1 and 3, and the article with the title 'Neue Bahnen' (New Paths) was published in Schumann's old paper, the *Neue Zeitschrift*. It is probably the most famous article in the history of musical criticism. Here was a youth barely twenty years old with a handful of compositions, and the greatest living master of symphonic music wrote of him as of one even greater. In a private note to Joachim he did not hesitate to quote the words, 'This is he that should come', and the tone of the public article was no less decisive. Needless to say, it roused a good deal of opposition ; it brought Brahms more enemies than friends, and there were plenty of people to ridicule Schumann's critical acumen. It did not, however, do Brahms the only real harm which such praise would have done to a lesser nature ; neither then nor at any time in his career did Brahms set himself up as a prophet or suffer from that form of human frailty appropriately called 'swelled headedness'. For many years he was to work on with a quiet concentration before he again attracted such public notice. Meantime his personal friendship with both the Schumanns ripened into intimacy, and when, not long after, Schumann's illness increased, Brahms's concern, like Joachim's, was that of a member of the family.

The climax of Schumann's illness came early in 1854, when in a fit of depression he threw himself into the Rhine and was rescued by some fishermen. The last two years of his life were spent in a private asylum near Bonn. There were intervals when his mind was perfectly clear and when he could even compose, but the intervals grew fewer, and he died on July 29, 1856. Mme Schumann had just returned from her first visit to England when the end came. She had bravely continued her career as a pianist through these trying years, and the visit to London to take part in the first Philharmonic concert of the season was the result of the staunch friendship of Sterndale Bennett, who on his appointment as conductor wrote to Mme Schumann to secure her presence.

Schumann's music up to the time of his death had had no

wide vogue in this country. He had never come here himself, though he had often thought of doing so. But Mme Schumann's first visit was to be followed by many others, which the older generation of music-lovers to-day remember with unmixed delight. Her first performance with the Philharmonic Society was Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*, with Mendelssohn's 'Variations sérieuses', but the concert was followed by a piano recital a few days later which included part of Schumann's 'Le Carnaval', her own variations on a theme by her husband, and two pieces by Brahms,<sup>1</sup> the first appearance of Brahms's name in an English concert programme.

### THREE MASTERS OF THE PIANO

It is time to sum up this portion of our story by more detailed reference to the piano music of the masters whose characters we have outlined. This can best be done by a few direct comparisons and contrasts. But in the first place let us glance over the general extent and character of their works.

Chopin's contribution is the largest, perhaps the most far-reaching, but, as we have seen, his piano music represents practically his sole output, which was very far from being the case with either Mendelssohn or Schumann. Chopin's more important works may be summarized as follows:

1. Two concertos for piano and orchestra (in E minor and F minor), with a number of other 'Concert pieces' written originally with orchestral accompaniment, such as the variations on 'La ci darem' and the 'Krakowiak'.

2. Three sonatas for piano (in C minor, Op. 4, B flat minor, Op. 35, and B minor, Op. 58). The popularity of the first has been overshadowed by the two later ones. Op. 35, containing the Funeral March, is for that reason the most famous. With them may be classed the four scherzos and three rondos, which have the character of separate sonata movements.

3. Four Ballades, four Impromptus, the Fantaisie in F minor,

<sup>1</sup> These pieces are described as Sarabande and Gavotte in the style of Bach. They do not appear in Brahms's published compositions, and no doubt were afterwards suppressed by their composer, who throughout his life ruthlessly destroyed whatever did not satisfy him.

the Barcarolle, and other pieces, with the series of nineteen nocturnes and twenty-four preludes, are all works in which the form is not bound to any established method.

4. Pieces founded on dance forms: 11 polonaises, 14 valses, and 52 mazurkas.

5. Twenty-seven *Études* (twelve in Op. 10, twelve in Op. 25, and three written for Moscheles's 'Méthode') are intended primarily as means of technical study, but raised the study from the prosaic standard set by Czerny and Cramer to an exquisite form of art.

To classify Schumann's piano music under headings without making a list of titles is a more difficult business. We may put his only piano concerto (in A minor, completed in 1846) at the head, and the *Introduction and Allegro* (G major) with a *Concert Allegro* (D minor) beside it, as works for piano with orchestra. The second class is easily filled up by the mention of three sonatas (in F sharp minor, F minor, and G minor), but then the difficulty of classification begins. His first twenty-three opus numbers are all filled with piano music, and almost every opus has a different title since almost every one is founded on some episode of his life or romance of his imagination. The titles sometimes refer directly to these episodes or romances, 'Theme on the name "Abegg", with variations' (see p. 76), 'Davidsbündlertänze' (see p. 79), 'Le Carnaval', and so on; sometimes the references are hidden under more general descriptions, such as 'Fantaisie' or 'Novelletten', but this does not make them fall more definitely into any one category. Later in his life the descriptive titles are fewer, but so are the compositions for piano. We have a recrudescence of piano music about the year 1850, which includes four fugues, the 'Waldscenen' (Wood scenes), 'Bunte Blätter' (Coloured leaves), three 'Phantasiestücke' (Fantastic pieces), and two 'Albumblätter' (Album leaves). The most that an attempt to classify Schumann can do is to show us its impossibility taken apart from his life, and for that reason we have dwelt with special minuteness upon the circumstances in which his work, especially his early work, was produced.

In Mendelssohn's case the classification is not very difficult, but it is also not very necessary. Beginning with the classical form of the sonata (in E, Op. 6), he practically laid the piano sonata aside and reserved the use of that form for his concerted chamber music and the orchestral symphony. Throughout his piano compositions there are many called 'Capriccio' or 'Fantaisie', beginning with the one in F sharp minor, Op. 5, which may be taken as typical, and the title generally means a piece which moves swiftly and brilliantly, and is full of Mendelssohn's quick birdlike energy. Preludes and fugues were another favourite form with him because they recalled Bach, the hero whom he most worshipped, and amongst his works of this kind the one in E minor from the set of six, Op. 35, is an excellent example. His gift for embroidering a theme with graceful ornament is shown in his variations, of which the set called 'Variations sérieuses' is the finest.

But when we have mentioned these things and remembered that Mendelssohn wrote two concertos (G minor and D minor) for piano with orchestra, there remains one form of piano composition which puts all his others in the shade, the series of the most lovable little pieces, four dozen altogether, which are known as 'Songs without Words' (see p. 78). These were his musical diary in the way that the 'Phantasiestücke' and 'Le Carnaval' were Schumann's. But the diary was continued at intervals through his life. A happy day in the country, a talk with a friend, a game with children, would bring one from him. Sometimes, but rarely, he gave them titles such as the 'Venetian Gondola Song'; more often he was content to let the circumstance which brought the music from him be forgotten, and often those who have loved the songs have made up fancy titles, some of them rather silly ones, such as 'The Bee's Wedding', to describe them by.

If we take the 'Songs without Words', the 'Phantasiestücke' (Op. 12) of Schumann, and the Préludes of Chopin, we get a perfectly simple means of placing the three together under the microscope. Here we can view them apart from the technical difficulties which make the larger works, at any rate, those of Schumann and Chopin, exceedingly hard to play, and we can be

quite sure that we are getting at the men themselves in their most intimate thoughts.

The first numbers will give us an instructive contrast, and by taking the first of each we avoid the snare of selected evidence. Mendelssohn's first 'Song without Words' (E major) is known to everybody. It is a lovely melody introduced above an accompaniment of smooth arpeggios supported on a bass moving generally in crotchets. It exactly reproduces the idea of a simple song with an accompaniment for the two hands at the piano, save that the pianist has to play the song melody and accompany it at the same time. The movement is in a ternary form, the traditional form of song (see Part I, p. 58); the first section modulating to the dominant is repeated, its middle section culminates in an impulsive cadenza, and a delicate coda is added to round off the whole with a reflection of the melody. Perfectly clear in form, it has a single purpose, the expression of the melody. The accompaniment emphasizes this, but arouses no conflicting interest.

## Ex. 13.

Schumann and Chopin are equally simple in the outlines of their forms, but both are very complex in their texture. Schumann's 'Des Abends' (In the Evening) is indeed a sort of extension of the ternary form, for the middle section is repeated before the coda, but that adds no real difficulty of comprehension. His, too, is a song melody accompanied, but you have only to look at the first few bars to see what is meant by a complex texture. The melody is in triple time; the accompaniment is duple time, which the signature shows to be the fundamental rhythm of the piece, so that the whole is a most delicate study in what is called cross rhythm (see Ex. 13). The form of the left-hand arpeggios, too, spread over wide intervals and, interlacing with those of the right hand, draws an attention to the accompaniment which Mendelssohn refused.

The first bar of Chopin's Prélude looks even more complicated:

Ex. 14.

Fundamentally, however, it is less so than Schumann's piece, for there is no real cross rhythm. All parts conform to the duple time, in his case also expressed by the signature  $\frac{2}{8}$ . But when you first look at it you ask: Where is the tune? The music looks like the four parts of a string quartet compressed into a piano score. Consider it as that, and you will find the tune is in the viola part. Here it is written out in full, and we choose the viola clef because it then lies on the stave.

Ex. 15.



It is just one sweep of melody without any modulation or other element of contrast to divide it into sections or make it analysable into binary or ternary form. It is as clear as daylight now, and you see that what we may call the violoncello and second violin parts accompany it with arpeggios, while the first violin reinforces it on the second beat of each bar. But though we have used the names of the instruments of the string quartet for purposes of illustration this is essentially piano music, and it and Schumann's 'Des Abends' give examples of one thing which they had in common, a love of intertwining polyphonic parts which, played by a pianist whose fingers are trained to give due emphasis to the slightest detail and who understands the art of phrasing by the use of the sustaining pedal, can all be made clear and yet all merge into a consistent whole.

In the music of Schumann and Chopin we find the pedal for the first time used as one of the intrinsic resources of the piano. We have seen that it was invented quite late in the eighteenth century (Part II, p. 22). Beethoven's deafness prevented him from realizing its importance; Schubert wrote too hastily to trouble much about it. It is recorded that Mendelssohn in

actual performance used it very sparingly, but to Schumann, whose favourite phrase 'Sehr innig'<sup>1</sup> heads this piece, and to Chopin, who lived his life through the piano, it was the very life-breath.

Its use enabled them to use counterpoint on the piano not merely as an intellectual interest but for the purposes of what is called colour. When Mendelssohn is most contrapuntal, and he was a master of counterpoint, he is least emotional. For this reason he is never very seriously contrapuntal in the 'Songs without Words'. When Schumann feels most deeply his parts divide themselves into many contrapuntal strands producing constantly shifting colours through their conflicting rhythms which can only be compared to the colours of shot silk. In Chopin the same methods are often seen, not always so much as an outcome of deep feeling as of his sheer delight in the beauty of the colour. You see it in the *Préludes* Nos. 5 & 8, more strongly in the cross rhythms of the *Études*, Op. 10, No. 10, and Op. 25, Nos. 2 & 3, and in the *Valse*, Op. 42, where a melody in duple time is accompanied by a *valse* rhythm.

We can afford to emphasize this side of Chopin's art, because the other side, in which he delights in one long strain of delicious melody accompanied by a delicately devised background of flowing harmony, is so familiar that there is not the least fear of its being forgotten. The series of nocturnes give us one example of it after another. The one in E flat (Op. 9, No. 2), that in F sharp (Op. 15, No. 2), and the most famous of them all, the Nocturne in D flat (Op. 27, No. 2), live constantly in mind. Their tunes, springing as water springs from the fountain to fall again in cascades of rainbow-coloured drops, have nothing to compare with them in all music. We know, of course, that neither Mendelssohn nor Schumann nor any one else ever ventured into that enchanted realm.

But leaving Chopin aside for the moment, let us take another comparative view of the other two, placing the 'Variations sérieuses' and the 'Études symphoniques' together. We

<sup>1</sup> Scarcely translatable except as 'very intimate'.

might bring in Chopin here with his variations on 'La ci darem', but we will not, because that work, though it shows his genius in flashes, has a good deal of the character of a pianist's 'show piece', whereas the two others are here treating the form of variations on a melody from a more serious standpoint, as the titles suggest. Here we see Mendelssohn's contrapuntal vigour in a way in which he never allows it to appear in the 'Songs without Words'. In each number of the seventeen variations the general form of the theme, with its striking harmony, is preserved; one never has the least difficulty in recognizing it as the basis of each variation. At the same time each number introduces some new figure which plays round the main form of the theme with infinite skill and variety.

Schumann, on the other hand, treats his theme more airily. He almost seems to wish us to lose sight of it as soon as it has been announced, for the very first variation introduces an entirely new idea, and it is not until the fifth bar that we are shown that this new idea moves in counterpoint with the theme. The second variation, too, has a new melody to which the theme forms a bass, and by the third number, which is not called a variation, the actual outline of the theme has disappeared altogether, and its influence is only felt in the fact that the general scheme of harmonic progressions is the same.

Trace the influence of the theme through all the numbers and you find that the most that can be said is that it is always offering some new suggestion to the composer's fancy. Sometimes it is a melodic quotation to be treated in canon (*Étude IV*), sometimes it is a new melody growing out of a quotation (*Étude VI*), but new ideas are so fruitful that the melody of the original theme becomes enveloped in them so that you may lose sight of it. The only constant quantity is the main structure of the binary form made clear by its harmonic cadences, while the details of the harmony are as freely varied as are those of the melody.

Mendelssohn approaches towards this freedom in variations X and XI, but he restrains himself, and almost immediately after (Var. XIII) gives a clear presentation of his melody in an inner

part, decorating it with those staccato ornaments which Joachim has told us gave peculiar charm to his touch at the piano.

Mendelssohn's, then, are variations primarily upon the melody; Schumann's are on the whole structure of the theme in all its bearings of melody, harmony, and form, and in this one discovers the greater depth and 'inwardness' of his music. *Étude XI* is a peculiarly beautiful instance of Schumann's coloured counterpoint. It is a duet in which the two parts combine in a melody directly derived from the theme. They treat it imitatively, and all the while a rich accompaniment is supplied by the rapidly moving harmonies of the bass part. Schumann here considers very little the limitations of the human hand. The right hand must stretch and leap to convey the movement of the two parts of the duet, the left hand must be supple indeed to produce the smooth murmuring effect required from the accompaniment. In this way Schumann's polyphonic style extended the pianist's technique immeasurably; Mendelssohn, who always wrote well within what would lie neatly under the pianist's hands, left the technique of the piano very much where he found it. A comparison between this duet and the lovely 'Duetto' in Mendelssohn's 'Songs without Words' (Op. 38, No. 6) will illustrate this point clearly.

One more point arises here for notice, and that is the great increase in harmonic range which is so conspicuous in the music of both Schumann and Chopin. Many of the passages in their work which present curious conglomerations of notes and look bewildering to analyse are simply the result of adding ornamental passages to a perfectly plain structure. The *appoggiatura*, which may be described as the use of one note to suggest another note, is as old as music itself, and when you get as many parts as the fingers of two hands upon the keys can represent moving with great rapidity through a series of such ornaments, the actual chords on which they are based may look almost unrecognizable, though to the ear, which takes in not only the note played but the note suggested, the passage represents no harmonic difficulty.

There are, however, some passages where the main pro-

gressions of harmony are, or were when they were written, startling. Those in Schumann and in most of the great German writers of the nineteenth century are chiefly the result of that discovery which we saw appeared early in Schubert's songs, the discovery of the possibility of sudden and abrupt modulation of key (see p. 34). Schubert, Schumann, and Wagner all used this resource with electrifying effect ; Mendelssohn was less attracted by it.

In Chopin's case, however, there is often another explanation to be found in the fact that his melody itself is not based upon the scale system of the major and minor modes with their fixed contrasts of tonic and dominant harmonies. Those contrasts are the very foundation of all German harmony and of most of the modern music of Western Europe, but, as we saw early in our study (Part I, Chapter I), they only represent one out of many possibilities. The old church music up to the age of Palestrina, and the folk music of all countries, including our own, were based upon many and various scale systems. Look through Chopin's Mazurkas, which are the direct outcome of the folk music of Poland, and you will find innumerable melodies which suggest the older modes or other scale progressions which sound strange to ears steeped in the major and minor modes of modern music. Here is one simple example from the Mazurka, Op. 6, No. 2 :

Ex. 16.

Obviously such tunes suggest very different harmonic relationships from those of what had come to be accepted as the normal scale, and Chopin's most subtle harmonic progressions will be found to be the result of applying modern instrumental harmony to such melodies. Symptoms of the same process appear in all

the young national schools of the nineteenth century, all those, that is, who founded their style *a new* by the application of modern harmony to a traditional folk melody. Grieg in Norway, the Russian composers, beginning with Glinka, Dvořák in Bohemia, and at the present day certain composers in England (see pp. 161-4, 169, 190), have worked upon similar lines, taking the traditional music of their own countries as the starting-point for a new development of both melody and harmony. Chopin's genius, however, nowhere appears more astounding than in this, that at a time when the relations of the scale seemed immutably fixed to all cultivated European people, he was able to render them so flexible that he could weave his national folk melody into a scheme of modern harmony and produce a perfectly consistent impression by means of his extreme sensitiveness to all the attributes of beauty.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV

[Direct comparisons such as that drawn in the text between the *Songs without Words* (Mendelssohn), the *Phantasiestücke* (Schumann), and the preludes (Chopin) should be made, using other examples.]

1. The nocturnes of John Field and of Chopin should be played.
2. The studies of Moscheles and of Chopin should be compared.  
[While I was writing this chapter a musical friend drew my attention to the fact that certain of Chopin's *Études*, notably Op. 10, No. 2, are founded on the figures of Moscheles's studies.]
3. Liszt's studies should be placed beside Chopin's.
4. Schumann's *Toccata* in C and Mendelssohn's *Capricci* should be contrasted.
5. Liszt's attitude towards programme music should be compared with Schumann's by the contrast of the 'Années de Pèlerinage' with the *Faschingsschwank*.
6. Liszt's 'Liebestraum' may be compared with Chopin's nocturnes.

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## CHAPTER V

### WAGNER AND THE OPERA

BEFORE we pursue the story of pure instrumental music to the stages which it ultimately reached in the latter half of the century, we must get some notion of the most complex musical mind of the time, Richard Wagner, and see how, devoting his many-sided energies to the problem of opera, he brought about a revolution which was not so much musical as mental. It amounted ultimately to a complete change of the standpoint from which music and its association with other forms of art was regarded.

A rapid sketch of Wagner's chequered career will suffice to give us the necessary basis of fact from which we can discover some of the main ways in which he effected his revolution.

WILHELM RICHARD WAGNER, the youngest of a large family, was born at Leipzig on May 22, 1813. He was therefore the contemporary in age of all the composers whose work we have been considering in the last chapter, but the original character of the work before him made him comparatively slow in development, so that he is far more a composer of the second half of the century than any of them save Liszt.

His mother, left a widow a few months after Richard's birth, soon married again an actor named Geyer; the event caused a removal of the family to Dresden, where Richard was put to school at the age of nine. His cleverness soon asserted itself. It is recorded that at the age of thirteen he translated the first twelve books of the *Odyssey* out of school hours. Poetry of all kinds attracted him immensely. He wrote voluminous verses, read Shakespeare in German translations and learnt enough English to attempt some translation on his own account, and stimulated his fancy by trying to write tragedies partly modelled on the Greek drama, partly on Shakespeare.

In these years Weber was at Dresden (see p. 18), and was on friendly terms with the Geyer family. He became a hero to the young Wagner, who knew *Der Freischütz* by heart. Soon after Weber's early death the family moved back to Leipzig, and there Richard added to his limited musical experiences his first hearing of the symphonies of Beethoven and the music to *Egmont*. He immediately determined that poetry and drama, even the great tragedy which he had designed to write, would be barren without music of the heroic Beethoven-like kind, so he resolved to write such music, and got hold of a book on harmony from which to learn the few technical facts which he thought it necessary to know. In this incident one sees Wagner in a flash. What he willed to do he was quite certain that he could do; he brushed aside every impediment. With supreme self-confidence everything and everybody throughout his life was made to conform to his will, and he never doubted the rightness of his will.

Needless to say, the great tragedy and the great music to it came to nothing, but this much came out of his enthusiasm that some definite musical teaching was procured for him. He was now fifteen, his schooling went on at Leipzig, and it is of passing interest to know that for a time he attended the 'Thomasschule'. That, however, did not bring him the acquaintance with Bach's music that one might expect, for in 1830 Bach was not treasured in Leipzig as he was at a later time when Mendelssohn had revived the 'Matthew Passion' and begun the great research among the manuscripts which Bach had left behind him.

Wagner, however, was taught music by Theodor Weinlig, who, as Cantor of the 'Thomasschule', was actually a successor of Bach. He entered the university in 1831 and wrote music, including a symphony in C major, with a good deal of diligence; but all the time, even though he allowed himself to be guided by Weinlig into the regular forms of instrumental music, he was inclined to revolt against them. It was in 1833, when he was twenty years old, that his career as a musician began with an engagement as chorus-master at the small theatre of Würzburg in Bavaria. Here he wrote an elaborate opera *Die Feen* (The

Fairies); both words and music were his own composition, and the story, considerably altered, was taken from an Italian play by Gozzi. Though this opera was put aside for many years, and has only been published since Wagner's death, there is a good deal in its melody and in its imaginative treatment of the fairy story which suggests his own style. In some ways it is more characteristic than the later and better-known *Rienzi*.

From this time began the period of more or less transitory theatrical engagements, tentative compositions, continuous difficulties largely made by himself, which lasted until his resolve to go to Paris in 1839. Another opera, *Das Liebesverbot* (Forbidden Love), founded on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, belongs to this time. Among his many moves from place to place the appointment as conductor to the opera at Magdeburg, where he met and married Minna Planer, is the most important. The difficulties were largely connected with money. Wagner was always getting into debt because of his rooted assurance that what he required he must have, that if he could not get it for himself other people ought to supply it for him.

This does not give a very agreeable picture of Wagner's character, and many phases of it were far from being agreeable; but it must be remembered that his extreme egotism rested on the conviction that he had the ability for great things. He never saw that other people could not be expected to take him at his own valuation until he had given proof of the justness of that valuation. The better side of him may be compared to Beethoven in his early days in Vienna (see Part II, p. 145); one can see now that he no more than Beethoven was playing a gambling game when he claimed to be given a chance to express himself freely. Like Beethoven, he only needed time to justify his artistic claims; but, unlike Beethoven, he made large material claims upon those about him while he was gaining time, and he had no scruples in pressing those claims to the detriment of others.

#### EXPERIENCES IN PARIS

In 1839, having got nothing but small theatrical appointments in Germany, which chiefly meant the duty of producing other

composers' operas, Wagner determined upon a great bid for fortune. He planned a visit to Paris, where he hoped to get a new opera performed by securing the good offices of Meyerbeer, then one of the most popular operatic composers of Paris, and one whose word would carry weight with the directors of the Paris opera. Again he was doomed to disappointment, but this Paris visit, nevertheless, had a great effect upon his career.

Wagner, his wife, and a huge Newfoundland dog (at that time his constant companion) all shipped on board a sailing vessel bound for London at the port of Pillau on the Baltic, and on the voyage he had his first experience of the sea and an exceedingly severe one. In the storm which they encountered the legend of the 'Flying Dutchman', which he had read as Heine told it, was graphically brought to mind, and his impressions became subsequently translated into music in the overture which remains one of the most vivid sea-pieces ever written for the orchestra. They landed in London and stopped there a week, but, quite unknown, did little beyond wandering about the streets and gazing at the Houses of Parliament. Thence they went to Boulogne, where Wagner met Meyerbeer, obtained the introductions which he wanted and proceeded to Paris. Meyerbeer's introductions did little for him, and during the two years spent in Paris hopes of a performance on a large scale were continually held out to him and as continually fell through. He went on with his work and finished *Rienzi*, scoring it boldly for a large orchestra in the manner popular with Paris audiences. He tried all sorts of means of getting work to support himself; some songs written to French words include the charming 'Dors, mon enfant'. He did a quantity of journalistic work both for French and German papers; for the former he wrote on the nature of German music, for the latter various reports on the music which he heard in Paris. He undertook to make piano arrangements from operatic scores, especially from the popular operas of Halévy, and was even reduced to arranging suites of pieces for the cornet from operas.

Painful as such work was for a man of genius, his genius enabled him to gather a good deal of useful experience from it.

There was much which he could learn from the orchestras of Paris even apart from the example of Berlioz. Certainly, he learnt to know how operas were made; technique, which as a boy had seemed to him a trivial matter, became the groundwork on which he was to build. Moreover, in Paris he met both Liszt and Berlioz, and though he began by falling foul of Liszt for being a successful virtuoso, the foundations of a friendship which later was to be of immense value to him were laid at this time. He could not fail to be impressed by Berlioz's extraordinary command of instrumentation (see p. 64).

#### DRESDEN AND AFTER

As his prospects in Paris became more hopeless, Wagner began to press for the performance of his opera *Rienzi* in Dresden, and when at last he heard of its acceptance he determined to leave Paris and return to his own country. The acceptance of *Rienzi* was soon followed by his appointment as conductor to the opera at Dresden, and it was here that Wagner had his first successes in the performances both of *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer* (The Flying Dutchman).

Here in 1842 he settled down to work with a consistency and enthusiasm which the opportunities called out. He came across a number of folk-tales in simple German versions—the story of 'Tannhäuser' and the contest of song; legends of the knights of the Grail, including stories of 'Lohengrin', 'Titurel', and 'Parsifal', and these soon worked upon his imagination. He began to mould them into material for drama with music, writing his own poems as usual, choosing from the stories those incidents which appealed to him, altering details in order to make the story consistent with his philosophic and ethical theories. For Wagner could never see a work merely as an artistic production; it always had to represent to him, and through him to his audience, some part of his philosophy of life—the redemption of Tannhäuser by the devotion of Elizabeth, the failure of Elsa to trust completely in the moral grandeur of her knight Lohengrin, in these things Wagner had a moral purpose which to him seemed the very essence of artistic expression.

He is almost if not quite a solitary instance of a great artist in music who viewed his art primarily from the preacher's point of view. In every department of life he was convinced of his own mission as a teacher. That fact in itself was enough to make his enemies (and no one ever had more enemies than Wagner) ready to point to discrepancies between his teaching and his life.

*Tannhäuser* was completed in 1844, and followed *Der fliegende Holländer* on to the stage at Dresden in 1845. It is interesting to notice that these years at Dresden included at least the beginnings in Wagner's mind of all the big music-dramas of his life. *Lohengrin* was the next one to occupy him fully, and we have seen that it and *Parsifal*, the last to be actually written, began to germinate in his mind soon after his leaving Paris. The idea for a comedy on the subject of a contest of song as a sort of counterpart to the tragedy of *Tannhäuser* also suggested itself to him, and was eventually fulfilled, though again many years later, in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. And it was in 1848 that he first began to dramatize the myths of the Nibelungen Saga which materialized subsequently into the great trilogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

But none of these projects save *Lohengrin* got fully shaped at this time, and the production of *Lohengrin* was checked by other preoccupations. He actually finished his score in the spring of 1848, and having done so he allowed himself to be drawn into the political disturbances which ended in the revolution of the next year. It has been pointed out that Wagner's speech to the political club called the 'Vaterlands-Verein' in June 1848 was by no means so violently seditious as it might have been, and some of his admirers have taken pains to discover that he was not really incriminated in the riots of the following year at all, that the order for his arrest was a mistake, and that it really referred to another man of the same name. But the latter part of this defence is quite untenable. Though in his autobiography, written many years later, Wagner was able to make out a case for his innocence, there is not the least doubt of his active part in the revolution, and it was a part of which at the time he had *no cause to be ashamed*. He had stood for reform in politics

as in art, but the powers against him were too strong ; his post, held directly under the king, was of course lost to him, and more than that, he was exiled from Germany. He had first escaped to Weimar, where Liszt was then engaged in preparing for the performance of *Tannhäuser*, and in the following year Liszt still kept his work alive by giving the first performance of *Lohengrin*. Meantime Wagner took up his abode in Switzerland, and from that time onwards until the year 1861 Zürich was his head-quarters. Not that he remained there all the time ; he came to London in 1855 to conduct the Philharmonic Concerts, he visited Paris more than once, and in 1860 revised *Tannhäuser* for performance there—a performance upon which he built great hopes, and which was one of the bitterest disappointments of his life. Its production met not only with active opposition, but with an amount of intrigue against its acceptance which made it necessary to withdraw the work after three performances.

#### THE THEORY OF MUSIC DRAMA

But before the events of Wagner's second failure in Paris much had happened to contribute to his development. It was natural that in the years immediately after his executive work as a conductor had been lost, he should return again to literary work, and many of his essays date from this time. It was in 'The Art-work of the Future' and 'Opera and Drama', written a year later, that he developed his theory of what opera should be with a fullness which makes these essays as memorable as Gluck's preface to *Alceste* (see Part II, p. 124). But Wagner's theories had not the simplicity of Gluck's. Their exact purport is difficult to unravel, but some of their leading characteristics may be summed up as follows :

1. In the 'Art-work of the Future' he outlines what for him was the ideal form of art. In the three principal means of expression, 'Tanz, Ticht, und Ton' (gesture, poetry, and sound), he finds an art which expresses all the faculties of man ; these he insisted must all be fully unfolded, and must be decorated by the plastic arts of painting and architecture.
2. In opera the expression of these various forms had always

been lop-sided. Gesture and poetry had been put in the background by music.

3. The poet should not restrict himself for the sake of the music, nor the musician for the poetry; each must intensify the other.

4. What was wanted to achieve the new music-drama seemed to be, first, 'a fellowship of all the artists'; secondly, a new public who would treat art not as an amusement but as a serious employment.

The soundness of Wagner's ideal has been proved in his own work and its ultimate acceptance. The unsoundness in his theories is chiefly due to his constant habit of generalizing from himself. He saw a great thing to do, therefore that thing must be 'the art-work of the future'. He had no inclination to write music apart from what he called 'its fertilization by poetry', therefore he asserted that music by itself was a dead thing. It is a strange irony that he himself should have proved the livingness of music alone in the tremendous finale of *The Ring* when, the drama over, the orchestra soars to a height of expression which it never reached in company with 'Tanz und Ticht' (see p. 116).

#### FROM *THE RING* TO *PARSIFAL*

After this outburst of theory Wagner settled down in 1852 to the work which more than all others was to prove both the truth and the untruth existing together in his ideas. The text of *The Ring* was written in a curious alliterative form of verse which he found susceptible to musical treatment, and the music of its first two parts, *Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, went forward in the following years. The latter was interrupted by his visit to London but was finished in 1856, and he was well on in the composition of *Siegfried* when another disturbance took place.

For years he had been a trying husband to his prosaic and uncomprehending wife. How much right and how much wrong there was on both sides in the growing quarrel which ultimately separated them it is not necessary to decide, but to read the

correspondence, since published, between them is to realize that Minna Wagner was a creature very much to be pitied. Possibly the worst of Wagner was that he did pity her, and always from the lofty standpoint of the teacher, which is so hard to bear with in ordinary life.

At any rate the home at Zürich was broken up, the composition of *The Ring* was checked, and instead Wagner turned to the passionate setting of the love-story of *Tristan und Isolde*, the only one of his music-dramas which seems to have seized him with a sudden impulse and to have been written in one outpouring of unflagging enthusiasm. The first sketch of the drama was made in August 1857, the poem was completed in the following month, and though it was two years before the score was actually finished, any one who has a notion of the immense labour merely of writing such a score can realize that they were two years of unremitting work. After the completion of *Tristan* came the revision of *Tannhäuser*, which included the re-writing of a great part of the first act, making the overture pass without a break into the first scene, and the texture of the music more closelywoven in the manner which had now become habitual to him. Then came the disaster of its production in Paris, and close on that public failure the private one of Minna's final break with him.

His fortunes were at their darkest. It must be remembered that he had heard no one of his great works performed since *Tannhäuser*. He had been debarred from hearing *Lohengrin* when Liszt gave it; *Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, half of *Siegfried*, and the whole of *Tristan* existed only on paper and in his imagination. That fact alone shows the tremendous strength of his genius. It is only surpassed by the case of Beethoven, who was cut off by deafness from ever hearing his greatest works.

In 1861 Wagner heard *Lohengrin* for the first time, when it was given in Vienna, and soon after the cloud of his ill-fortune was further lifted by the withdrawal of his sentence of exile from Germany. These events were the forerunners of better times, and with his fuller freedom of action he started buoyantly upon the composition of that most lovable of all his works, the comedy planned long since, which now became *Die Meistersinger von*

*Niernberg*. This, however, was not, like *Tristan*, written straight away. It was dovetailed in with further work upon *Siegfried* and some sketches for *Parsifal*.

The accession of Ludwig II to the throne of Bavaria was an even more decisive turning-point in Wagner's fortunes. That Wagner, the rebel against every established institution, the unruly 'Hof-Kapellmeister' and political agitator of the 'forties, should after a decade of exile return to become the protégé of a king seems one of the strangest reversals of history. But as far as Wagner himself was concerned the change was as human as it was illogical. A king who entertained liberal views towards art and who showed his liberality by dispatching a secretary to find out Wagner and invite him to his capital to finish his work, who followed up this step by endowing him with a pension and inviting him to supply a scheme for new musical education at Munich, naturally placed the idea of monarchy before the rebel in a most favourable light. Wagner began to see opening before him the possibility of realizing the dream of his life, nothing less than the firm establishment of a home for his art free from the cramping conditions of the ordinary opera-house, a place where he might found that 'fellowship of all the artists' and draw together his new and appreciative public.

One of the immediate results of Ludwig's generosity was the first performance of *Tristan* at Munich in 1865, conducted by von Bülow. Afterwards the composition of *Die Meistersinger* went forward rapidly; a group of musicians gathered round Wagner and became inspired by his ideals of performance. Among them was Hans Richter, who was ultimately to become the greatest conductor of Wagner's music. The score of *Die Meistersinger* was finished in the autumn of 1867 at Triebschen, on the Lake of Lucerne, where in these years Wagner made his home. Here Richter spent much time with him and copied the score of *Die Meistersinger*. Minna Wagner had died in 1866, and the complications of Wagner's private life at this period, which ultimately ended in his marriage with Cosima, the daughter of Liszt and formerly the wife of von Bülow, are too unedifying to be entered into here. The birth of their son in 1869 is

a landmark in Wagner's artistic life; that too occurred at Triebischen. *Siegfried*, the third part of *The Ring*, was completed three months after his son was born, and the boy was named Siegfried after the hero whose fortunes Wagner had had so much difficulty in tracing through his great work. The event was further celebrated by the composition of the beautiful orchestral piece known as the 'Siegfried Idyll', a piece in which leading themes from the opera of *Siegfried* mingle with old German cradle songs and are delicately scored for a small orchestra. It was a birthday serenade for Cosima. Richter got together a band of local musicians, taught them their parts, himself played the trumpet part, and a private performance, conducted by Wagner, was given at their house.

At last the great project of *The Ring*, a drama occupying three whole evenings in performance, with a 'Vorabend' (introductory evening) as a prelude, was nearing completion. *Götterdämmerung*, its final section, went rapidly forward in the year 1870, the more so because some of its music had been planned years ago under the title of *Siegfrieds Tod* (Siegfried's death).

#### THE FOUNDING OF BAYREUTH

And now at last the musical world at large was sufficiently alive to the importance of what Wagner was doing for its more enterprising members at least to attempt an active share in the project of building a house for the work. Wagner Societies began to be formed as tributes of admiration and also to help in the prosaic duty of raising funds. In 1872 a place was found for the theatre: Bayreuth, a quiet Bavarian town off the main lines of traffic yet large enough to be a place where people could gather, a royal residence, but otherwise in size and surroundings like our smaller English county towns, such as Taunton or Ludlow for example, was admirably fitted for the purpose. Wide undulating hills crowned with far-reaching woods lie about the town, and a spot was found on the slope of the hill where the woods begin, a mile or so beyond the houses.

Here, on Wagner's fifty-ninth birthday, May 22, 1872, the foundation-stone of the 'Festspielhaus' (Festival playhouse) was

laid. Everything which could concentrate the attention upon the drama and its music was thought of down to the smallest details.

The auditorium, instead of being built in the old fashion of circular galleries, is fan-shaped, sloping upwards from the stage at the narrow end in regular tiers which reach in a slight curve from side to side of the building. This plan gives a maximum of seating room, and also has the advantage of giving to every spectator a clear view of the stage, which is practically identical from every part of the house. The rows of doors on each side of the fan make it possible for the audience to reach their seats without a crush. The orchestra, placed between the stage and the auditorium, is sunk below the level of both and is screened from view by steel shields. This has a very appreciable effect upon the tone of the orchestra, it softens the outlines of phrase and blends the instruments into a sonorous whole. The result is a great beauty of tone with, however, some diminution of strength. The conductor behind the outer shield sees both the stage and his players but the audience cannot see him, and this is perhaps one of the greatest advantages of the plan. Every one who has seen an opera knows the distraction caused by the waving arms of the conductor between the stalls and the stage.

The stage itself was planned to accommodate the most elaborate scenery, machinery, lighting, and other arrangements according to the most modern ideas—most modern, that is, before electric power was in general use.

At last, in 1876 the 'Festspielhaus' was sufficiently finished for use, and the first Festival, that is the first performance of the whole of *The Ring*, conducted by Richter, took place there from August 13 to 17. The famous violinist, Wilhelmj, led the orchestra. A remarkable company of singers came together and studied their parts in music and drama with enthusiastic devotion. Mme Materna was the Brünnhilde; Herr Betz was the first Wotan. Musicians from every country in Europe congregated there to hear *The Ring*, and at last Wagner's highest ambition was fulfilled. It is worth while to notice here that this was also the year in which Brahms's first symphony was produced at Karlsruhe (see p. 142).

The problems were not quite solved yet, however. There was a large deficit on the balance sheet of the festival, which made the most strenuous efforts necessary if the Bayreuth theatre was to become an established institution. Like many German musicians, Wagner turned to the country most able to supply funds. A visit to England, including festival concerts of his music at the Albert Hall, was his next venture, but some mistakes in management nearly made the venture increase instead of lessen the debt. The situation was saved by some extra concerts, which provided a fairly substantial sum. These concerts, however, did much to give English people a juster view of Wagner's art than they had had before, and with them the general notion that Wagner's music consisted of a noisy orchestra drowning the singers and setting melody at defiance began to wane ; it took many years to die.

Only one more event need be mentioned : the second festival at Bayreuth in 1882, when *Parsifal*, his last work, was produced. Wagner called this a 'Bühnen-Weihfestspiel' (a dedicatory festival drama). It was the only one of his operas written for the Bayreuth stage, and he determined that so far as he could ensure it it should be confined to Bayreuth. There his ideal audience could gather in a mood to take in what he felt to be his last and most serious word, and it was the exclusive possession of *Parsifal* which brought pilgrims from all parts of the world to Bayreuth until the year 1914, when it became no longer legally possible to prevent its performance elsewhere. Wagner died at Venice on February 13, 1883, leaving the Festspielhaus to the care of his widow. Under her direction the festival was repeated not every year but for a month or so every two or three years until 1914, when it was cut short on July 28 by Germany's declaration of war. It is worth recording that this festival had included *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Parsifal*, Wagner's Alpha and Omega, the first and last of the great music-dramas, and one cycle of *The Ring*, when the audience, coming out from witnessing the death of Siegfried, the end of the gods, and the enveloping of earth and heaven in flame and flood, heard the news which put an end to the Walhalla which Wagner had raised.

## WHAT WAGNER ACCOMPLISHED

To return, however, to Wagner himself, we have to ask: What did he accomplish? Did he realize that ideal union of the arts and that 'fellowship of all the artists', and did he establish the direction of 'the art-work of the future' by his own mighty achievements in music-drama? We may give the answer 'no' on all these three points, and yet say emphatically that his life's work was a unique and triumphant achievement.

In the first place, his union of all the arts was limited by the fact that his genius was infinitely greater as a musician than as a poet or a dramatist. A master of tone (Ton), he was only a very skilful workman with words (Ticht), and he was unable ultimately to control the third element in his scheme, gesture (Tanz), which necessarily rested with the interpreters (see p. 110).

Moreover, his overmastering conviction of the moral importance of his ideas made him insist upon explaining himself at every crucial point, and explanation is fatal to drama. He never outgrew this habit. In the first act of *Parsifal*, Gurnemanz seats himself in order to explain at great length, ostensibly to the young knights of the Grail but really to the audience, how the Order was founded, how it fell into decay, and why the wound of Amfortas cannot be healed until the pure knight, a fool in all earthly things but wise in sympathy, shall appear.

Explanations such as these are constant in *The Ring*, where the whole of the complex story has an allegorical meaning; in *Die Meistersinger* they give way to a tendency to harangue the multitudes on principles of artistic criticism; in *Tristan*, save for King Mark's monologue, they are much less insistent, and the fact together with the simplicity of the story brings that work nearest to the ideal union which he had asserted ought to be found. The story itself is poetry, the drama is not cumbered by elaborate scenic effects such as bring *The Ring* at times, and even *Parsifal*, perilously near to the distractions of popular pantomime. If you would realize the fullest extent to which Wagner reached his goal in this direction you should see an intelligent performance of *Tristan* after first carefully reading the poem.

It will be scarcely necessary to give equal preliminary study to the music. Wagner did not write his music to be analysed, nor for that matter did any of the great musicians, though a careful analysis of it may be very helpful. But a careless analysis, particularly that kind which consists of picking out a dozen or more leading themes, fitting each with a name or a character, and 'spotting' them every time they recur, is not helpful. There are people who go to hear Wagner armed with little books of themes, and spend all the time delighting in discovering the appearance of the ring, or Wotan's spear, or Siegfried's sword. They never get much further in understanding what is going on. It is true that there are themes connected with these and a hundred other things in *The Ring*, so that the process of identification is possible, if unprofitable.

But in *Tristan* the process is scarcely possible because there Wagner is not concerned with 'things' at all, but with what he called 'states of the soul'; and the themes used to express these states are merged into one another and carried forward upon a flood of feeling expressed in music which justifies itself to any one who knows the poem, and listens with open ears and a sympathetic heart to its unfolding by voice and orchestra.

#### WAGNER'S MUSICAL PROGRESS

It is time to look more closely into Wagner's development of this strongly individual style, and to do so it is necessary to go back to the first of his distinctive works, *Der fliegende Holländer*. Much has been said by Wagner himself, and by all who have studied his work in the light of what he wrote about it of his reforming opera on the basis of Beethoven's symphonic music. If, however, we take *Der fliegende Holländer* as his starting-point, we see that song, as it had been developed by Schubert, exerted at least as strong an influence upon him as the symphonic style of Beethoven. The ballad which Senta sings in the second act is the musical core of the whole drama, and if you place that ballad beside the dramatic songs of Schubert, such as 'An Schwager Kronos' and 'Gruppe aus dem Tartarus' (see pp. 31-4), you see at once the likeness of style. In both

we get the sweeping declamatory phrases for the voice, in both the illustrative accompaniment,

‘Wie saust der Wind,  
Wie pfeift’s im Tau !’  
(How the wind howls,  
How it whistles through the rigging !)

You can hear it all in the rushing, chromatic passages of the strings and the strident chords of the wind instruments. In the ballad are two personalities. There is the grim, weather-worn seaman condemned to ride the storm year in, year out ; there is the woman who can save him and bring him rest through her love, and the two are contrasted musically.

Ex. 17.

(a)

(b)

Doch dass der ar - me Mann noch Er - lo - sung fän - de auf

*p*

Yet that the poor man may find redemption on

Er - den.

*pp*

earth . . .

From these two personalities spring, therefore, the leading themes (*Leitmotive*) associated with the characters of the Dutchman and Senta, but realize once and for all that these leading themes are not mere phrases with a label attached to them ; they spring spontaneously out of the emotional contrasts of the drama.

The more real Wagner's characters became to him the more constant was his use of the melodies associated with them. In *Der fliegende Holländer* and in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* there are a good many passages where the characters as expressed in the music drop into the background and the progress of the opera is carried on by more conventional means, in the manner of the older forms of opera. Elaborate ensembles, in which all the characters are singing together, are found in these comparatively early works (see, for example, the end of Act I of *Lohengrin*), and in such moments clear characterization is impossible. A general musical effect is all that is aimed at ; the singers on the stage have more or less to abandon their position as characters to become musical performers.

Later, therefore, Wagner gave up the employment of such ensembles to a very large extent. He based his style more exclusively, so far as the singers were concerned, on dramatic song, and with his firmer grip of the orchestra he raised the illustrative accompaniment to the position of a continuous musical commentary upon the characters, their actions, thoughts, and feelings.

The opening prelude to *Das Rheingold*, a hundred and thirty-six bars all based on a single chord of E flat major, shows the idea of the illustrative accompaniment carried to its furthest point. It is to introduce a scene at the bottom of the Rhine where the Rhine-maidens guard their treasure, the gold from which the ring is afterwards forged. The music is to give the hearers the groundwork of the whole story. Deep beneath the water the forces which are to move the actions of gods and heroes are waiting for their destiny, and the theme first outlined by the horns is one which may be associated with the flow of the river or with the inevitable force of the world. Nothing is more striking in the development of the music of *The Ring* than the way in which its ideas are linked with one another, are actually transformed and grow in musical importance as the drama develops.

Take, for example, one clear instance from *Das Rheingold*; at the end of this first scene when Alberich the dwarf has seized the gold from the Rhine-maidens and carried it off to forge from it the ring which will give him power over the world, this phrase lingers in the orchestral commentary:

Ex. 18.

The text-books will tell you that this is the motive of the ring. In a sense it is, but it is much more. What it suggests to the mind is not a circle of gold but a sense of hopeless longing; it does not picture an object, it conveys a human feeling. The longing may be the covetous desire of Alberich for power or the

sighing of the Rhine-maidens for their lost treasure. Its purport remains undefined, but presently the theme itself is transformed with changes in its intervals, a fuller harmony, a richer orchestration, and a more decisive rhythm; and we hear for the first time a theme to which again the text-books give a concrete name, the theme of 'Walhalla', the home of Wotan and the gods.

**Ex. 10.**



We see that the two are really one, and from the drama it soon appears that Walhalla itself is the realization of the longing of the gods.

In this gradual extension of an idea we get what may be called by an analogy with symphonic form the principal subject of Wagner's drama, and here comes in the justice of his claim to have remodelled the opera on the basis of Beethoven. For while the four parts of *The Ring*, with all their immense range of character, are on a scale which would be impossible to pure instrumental music, one yet realizes that a wide process of symphonic development is carried through them. Play side by side the first statement of the Walhalla theme by the orchestra as it appears in the twenty bars preceding the second scene of *Rheingold* and the last twenty-eight bars of *Götterdämmerung*, and the process of symphonic development must be clear once and for all.

It was this colossal power of musical development which made it impossible for Wagner to fulfil his theory of the union of the arts. He could not restrain his music from outrunning its companions, poetry and gesture. Musicians may feel that he did something far bigger and far better than the fulfilment of his theory, and they do feel that taking *The Ring* as a whole, when every redundant passage and every tedious repetition has been noted and allowed for, there is such overwhelming force in the musical treatment of the legend that what would be

glaring faults according to Wagner's own theory in any smaller work become mere spots in the sun.

The continual progress of musical development from *Rheingold* to *Götterdämmerung* is the more amazing when one recollects the long interruptions which we have seen occurred in the course of the composition of *The Ring*. It is not accurately known at what point in the second act of *Siegfried* Wagner abandoned it in order to compose *Tristan*, and there is no internal evidence to show.

Most people will agree that the second act of *Götterdämmerung* is a comparatively weak one, that the chorus of vassals and the trio of Brünnhilde, Hagen, and Gunther with which it ends is a partial return to the old ensemble style which Wagner had put behind him. But that is probably the result of his desire to use up the material of his early scheme for *Siegfrieds Tod*, a lapse which is obliterated by the third act, where the music of *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and the fundamental ideas first shadowed in *Das Rheingold* are summed up and welded into an overwhelming finale.

Neither the subject of *Tristan* nor that of *Die Meistersinger* required anything like the wealth of musical material necessary to *The Ring*. We have spoken of *Tristan* as coming nearest to the theory of union of the arts, and of *Die Meistersinger* as the most lovable of Wagner's works. The natures of the subjects explain both. The delightful character of Hans Sachs, the shoemaker poet of Nürnberg, his genial views of life, his sympathy and unselfishness, make him unique amongst Wagner's heroes. Almost everywhere else Wagner's heroes are tainted with his own egotism; what they will is right, and they conquer by their self-assertion. Hans Sachs conquers by his humility, he does not champion his own work but another's, and the whole of the music of *Die Meistersinger* is influenced by the character of Sachs. Except for the places where Wagner cannot resist homilies on art and criticism it is freed from the fetters of his own personality. He is here far more willing to let the listeners take his work in their way rather than in his. One may find in it merely a delightful picture of the old German

life of the sixteenth century. The antiquary will find it full of truthful allusions to mediaeval customs from those of the city guilds to those of musical tablature. The musician can revel in the skill with which three or four melodies develop contrapuntally in the overture ; the lover of romance delights equally in the songs of Walther and Eva, the picture of the old street in the moonlight with the watchman droning his call as he goes, and the sunlit festival of St. John's day. The lover of comedy finds satisfaction in the street brawl and Beckmesser's rough handling by the apprentices. And again, notice that the strength of all these impressions is a musical one. All Wagner's means are perfectly at his command ; he never wrote a broader or more firmly knit melody than the 'Preislied', or designed a more vivid and wholly appropriate ensemble than the chorus of the street brawl, or one of greater musical beauty than the quintet.

One might expend many pages in examining the planning of the orchestral commentary, the power with which it bursts into the most vivid prismatic colouring or retires to form a gently suggestive background to the voices.

Enough has been said to show that if we answer the first part of the question with a negative it is simply because Wagner's powers as a musician were so much greater than those as poet or dramatist that his musical splendour swamps all other considerations.

What of the second part, that 'fellowship of all the artists' in which he saw the hopes of the future ? As far as the fellowship consisted in securing the devoted collaboration of conductors, singers, and instrumental musicians for the production of his works at Bayreuth he certainly succeeded to a remarkable extent. He gave a wholly new standard of sympathetic interpretation to the conductors, such as Mottl and Richter, whom he trained. He carried to its highest point the remodelling of the orchestra begun by Berlioz, and he made singers realize their responsibilities as artists in a way never achieved by his predecessors. The idea of co-operation was spread by Wagner in the opera as it was spread by Joachim in the interpretation of quartet music, and his conductors carried his lessons into the orchestra of the

concert-room and interpreted the symphony in the light of his teaching.

Yet Bayreuth failed artistically, primarily because Wagner never dissociated the art-work of the future from the art-work of Richard Wagner. He created it as a shrine for his own works, and his heirs guarded the shrine so jealously after his death that the idea of making it a home for new art later than his own would have seemed a profanation. It was with difficulty that any improvements even in the presentation of Wagner's own works were admitted, and so the fellowship of the artists died and 'the Bayreuth tradition' took its place. His Festspielhaus became the stronghold of that very conservatism against which in his vigorous days Wagner had fought with all his strength.

Nor can it honestly be said that that failure was the fault of Wagner's heirs and in no way due to himself. Any one who can listen dispassionately to *Parsifal*, without being blinded by the religious fervour of its subject, the beauty of some of its musical ideas, and the rich glow of its orchestration, must feel that, apart from certain high moments, it is the work of one whose force has spent itself, and who has to fall back on ways of expression which have become habitual. If *Parsifal* had not been enshrined at Bayreuth and surrounded with the glamour of an almost sacred ritual, it is very doubtful whether thirty years after it was written people would have given it any place beside Wagner's masterpieces.

#### WAGNER'S INFLUENCE ON OTHER COMPOSERS

Long delayed as Wagner's influence was (it made little impression before the 'seventies) when it did come it was tremendous and for the time being staggering. Only the very strongest spirits could maintain their individuality against it. In every country of Europe the second-rate composers became 'Wagnerized'. He taught so much, he showed so many possibilities of orchestral sound never before realized, he had so dominating a way of expressing himself, that weaker spirits could not resist the temptation to copy him, and they are still doing it. But all the composers whose work has lasted, and

whom therefore we are to study in the following chapters, resisted the temptation. They might learn many lessons from him, but they could not subject their individuality to his. The crowd of Wagnerian operas which were poured out in Germany amounted to very little of real importance. Of the young composers who gathered round Wagner in his later years, and owned him as a leader, only one, Engelbert Humperdinck (born 1854), need here be mentioned. His delicious children's opera *Hänsel und Gretel* is indeed moulded on Wagner's style, but the style is so differently applied to the simple folk-story of the children lost in the wood, the whole is so fresh in its melody, so apt in its orchestral commentary, that it stands alone. Most works of disciples begin by emphasizing their master's mannerisms, which are his weakest points. Humperdinck, both in *Hänsel und Gretel* and in its later companion *Königskinder*, is free from that snare. Young people who are to grow up to the appreciation of Wagner should be brought up upon Humperdinck, and older people who are sometimes afflicted by the strenuousness of Wagner himself come back to *Hänsel und Gretel* with a sigh of relief and a sense of restored youth.

Though a certain resistance to Wagner's influence was necessary if music and the opera were to live, music, and especially the opera, could never be the same again after he had spoken. His effect upon his great Italian contemporary Verdi is a striking example of this.

GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-93) began his long career as a writer of Italian operas in the traditional manner of recitative, aria, and ensemble numbers, which he inherited from his countrymen of the first part of the century. An extraordinary power of depicting a graphic situation in a vocal melody was from first to last characteristic of him, and in the greater number of his operas that power was all-sufficing for his needs. Many of his works, such as *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, and *Rigoletto* (none of these are among his earliest ones), have an irresistible grip upon the imagination by their sheer force of melody, and *Aida*, written in 1871, is a unique example of a romantic story told entirely in a series of broad and intensely expressive tunes.

Certainly, there could be no doubt about Verdi's individuality, and his reputation at the time he wrote *Aida* was far wider than Wagner's own. Sixteen years followed before he wrote another opera. Wagner's great works had become world-wide possessions, and all the musical world had gone after him, spurning Italian opera, and Verdi amongst it, as a plaything with which *prime donne* amused their admirers, when Verdi produced his *Otello* and followed it with *Falstaff*. A tragedy and a comedy, both founded upon Shakespeare, with finely written libretti by Boito, a literary man and himself a composer of no mean order, suggested a new fellowship of the artists, and one coming not from Germany but from Italy. People were amazed to find many lessons from Wagner embodied in these works; the plots were developed in continuous music through the whole scene, the musical style was made flexible to the dramatic situation in the way that Wagner advocated. But it was the same Verdi, the same man of eloquent melodies, without desire to preach or to teach, merely anxious to express what was in him, and adapting himself to the new forms because he saw that only so could he express himself to the new generation. Verdi's art had always been serious and always been great, but only in these last works did he, through Wagner's example, find a way of couching it which was altogether worthy of its greatness.

Many minds of many nations were at work during Wagner's own life who were destined to play a part in 'the music of the future'. Some of them he knew and reckoned with too lightly. Of others he had not the faintest conception. Wagner, the artist, was not to blame for this. An artist can do no better than follow out his own ideal unfalteringly, even ruthlessly if need be, and this Wagner did as few have done. It was only as a critic who aspired to be a prophet that he was at fault. Like the Flying Dutchman, he could not even foresee where his own ship would come to port; still less could he tell the courses on which others were steering. We have now to attempt to trace some of those courses, a process made possible for us by the tracks which the vessels have left in their wake.

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V

1. The instances of Wagner's workmanship must be played on the piano and sung.

- (a) Senta's ballad and the overture to *Der fliegende Holländer*.
- (b) The prelude to *Rheingold*.

(c) The transformation of the ring theme to the Walhalla theme (*Rheingold*, scenes i and ii).

(d) The apotheosis of the Walhalla theme at the end of *Götterdämmerung*.

2. The original self-contained form of the overture to *Tannhäuser* should be contrasted with the revised form leading into the Venusberg ballet. Compare it also with Weber's overture (see illustrations to Chapter I) and analyse from the point of view of material used from the opéra.

3. The prelude to *Tristan* and the overture to *Die Meistersinger* should be played either as piano solos or arrangements for piano duet, and the same principle of analysis applied.

4. Other scenes, such as Wotan's Abschied (*Walküre*, Act III), the Preislied (*Meistersinger*, Act III), the Liebestod (*Tristan*, Act III), make excellent illustrations where an adequate singer is available; they should be used not as independent songs but to show how they grow up out of the material of the dramas and become culminating points of emotion.

5. The Siegfried Idyll (arranged as piano duet) should be played; the interweaving of themes from *Siegfried* and of folk melodies should be noted.

6. A careful study of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* on the same principle will make clear to young students the instrumental texture of opera as Wagner left it in a way which is simpler than the examples from Wagner's own works.

## BOOKS OF REFERENCE

*The Life of Wagner*, by Ashton Ellis, 6 volumes (founded upon the German life by Glasenapp).

*Wagner's Prose Works*, translated into English by Ashton Ellis.

*My Life*, the official English translation of Wagner's autobiography, *Mein Leben*, published after his death.

[This, representing Wagner's own point of view, is untrustworthy as to facts, and the English translation is not always accurate.]

*Wagner as Man and Artist*, by Ernest Newman. (J. M. Dent.)

[A keenly critical and illuminating study.]

## CHAPTER VI

### CHAMBER MUSIC AND THE SYMPHONY

THERE is no surer sign of a musically cultivated people than their forwardness in the production and performance of concerted chamber music. Look back through history and you will realize the truth of this. The madrigal is the first instance (see Part I, p. 20). Springing into life in the Netherlands, among what was then the most musically cultivated people, it won its way in Italy in the sixteenth century and then in England, because its very existence depended upon the association of a number of people in a common interest, and in those countries many shared the interest of music. You can test the temper of a people by discovering what they do when they meet together for social intercourse. They talk politics, or they play bridge, or they make music. Nowadays in England it is generally one of the former ; in the England of Queen Elizabeth's reign, though politics were fully as absorbing as they are to-day (bridge had yet to be invented), they occupied themselves very largely with concerted music, first the madrigal, then concerted instrumental music for viols (see Part I, pp. 48-9). At that time a distinctive form of English concerted music—chamber music, as we now call it—came into being and was widely practised both by professional and amateur musicians.

The very name 'chamber music' suggests its chief condition. It is the music which flourishes not as part of a public function, such as a concert or an opera performance, but in the home. You do not judge of a man's literary taste by the books which he keeps in handsome bindings in a room which he only uses on great occasions ; you get at the shelves in his private den and pick out the volumes which are worn and shabby with use. So with a country's music. Any nation can keep up an appearance of musical taste by a succession of public concerts and

operas, but when you find its people practising quartets and other concerted music, vocal or instrumental, for their own pleasure in their own homes, then you know that a real musical life is there. That was the musical life of England in the seventeenth century, and it has begun again in the twentieth, chiefly amongst those parts of the population who are not overburdened with the deceitfulness of riches.

But the general practice of instrumental concerted music means a higher state of musical cultivation than concerted vocal music implies, for to enjoy that you have to be able to think in terms of music itself, apart from its association with words, and further, it means a more advanced technical education. People can sing to a certain extent by the light of nature ; it requires comparatively small training to enable any one with a good natural voice to sing well in a madrigal, but even Doctor Johnson, that most unmusical of Englishmen, saw that the case is very different with a stringed instrument.

‘There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the fiddle. In all other things we can do something at first. Any man can forge a bar of iron if you give him a hammer ; not so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one ; but give him a fiddle and a fiddlestick, and he can do nothing.’

So concerted music for stringed instruments flourishes wherever the musical perception is not only strong, but technically developed. It is found in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the violin schools of Italy from Corelli to Tartini (see Part II, pp. 17 to 20), then in the string quartets of Viennese society developed under Haydn’s influence (Part II, p. 25 *et seq.*), a great movement, the greatest which this form of art has ever known, in which Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert all shared ; in the nineteenth century the fact that Germany was essentially the land of concerted chamber music is the strongest sign that musical cultivation was ripest in Germany.

When fruit is over-ripe it falls to the ground, and quite lately there have been many symptoms of the over-ripeness of German music ; but the fact that since the death of Brahms in 1897

Germany has produced no chamber music of first-rate importance is the clearest evidence of the fall of the fruit and the autumn of German music.

#### MENDELSSOHN AND SPOHR

Mendelssohn's upbringing surrounded him with chamber music. At those Sunday parties in his father's house, every kind of music for instruments was played by the artists who came there week by week (see p. 73). His own first three opus numbers consist of quartets for piano and strings, and many of his best early works are for some combination or other of solo instruments. Amongst them is the octet for strings which was written in 1825, the year in which Spohr, one of the greatest violinists of the time, visited the Mendelssohns.

LOUIS SPOHR (born 1784), besides being a great player, was a most prolific composer. His reputation was then at its height, and his visit to Berlin was for the performance of his most successful opera, *Jessonda*. His memory is kept green in England at the present day by his oratorio, *The Last Judgement*, which still is to be heard in innumerable churches whenever the season of Advent comes round. But though he made himself famous on the Continent as a composer of opera, and in England as a composer of oratorio, his violin music was his point of real distinction. His concertos are still studied by violinists because they are models of style in the art of instrumental phrasing, and he also carried his faultless violin style into the quartets and double quartets which are his most important contribution to chamber music.

The great solo-player is not the man, however, who most readily produces great concerted music. Spohr so frequently thought of the first violin as a solo part accompanied by the other instruments that his works of this kind have a rather lop-sided effect. We have seen how Haydn developed the polyphonic equality of the members of the string quartet (Part II, p. 23 et seq.), and that equality is the first principle of all good quartet writing. Spohr had a considerable influence on Mendelssohn, who learnt much from him as to effective writing

for the violin. The lessons were never forgotten, and they bore fruit years afterwards in that wonderful clearness of phraseology which makes Mendelssohn's violin concerto one of the great masterpieces of musical literature. The Octet, however, especially in its first movement, gives instances of the tendency to think of the top part first, which is a less profitable result of Spohr's example. Only in the Scherzo, a movement of exuberant gaiety handled with exquisite delicacy, does Mendelssohn's genius appear perfectly at ease, and, as we have already seen (p. 86), that was the type of movement which flowed most directly from his nature.

All through his life Mendelssohn continued to compose music for strings with or without the piano. The series of string quartets was begun with that now known as No. 2 in A, in Berlin, 1827; No. 1 in E flat, having a peculiarly fresh and charming melody as a principal theme which recurs again at the end of the finale, was written in London in 1829; and three more quartets, published together as Op. 44, were written in Berlin (1837-8). Just before his death, during that last sad visit to Switzerland, he tried to bring himself back to life by the composition of a string quartet (in F minor) which was published after his death as Op. 80.

This last fact may be taken to emphasize the peculiar intimacy of quartet music. It is the one of all the means of musical expression in which the composer's thought is delivered most directly to his listeners. Without the advantages of strong contrasts of tone such as orchestral music naturally possesses, or of personal interpretation such as is always a powerful element in solo piano music, it does not lend itself to illustration of literary ideas as both the orchestra and the piano do. The listener to a quartet asks simply, 'What has the composer got to say?' and the more he has to say the more he turns to this ungarnished way of saying it.

#### SCHUMANN'S CHAMBER MUSIC

Schumann, as we have seen, came to chamber music comparatively late in his career, and his three string quartets were

all composed together and dedicated to Mendelssohn, whose example he followed in writing them. There were many things in Schumann's habit of mind which disposed him more naturally to this sort of music than Mendelssohn was disposed. The 'Innigkeit' (inwardness) which led him to that richly polyphonic style in his piano music is just, one would think, the quality of the great quartet writer, and many evidences of it appear especially in the last of the three, the beautiful work in A major. But Schumann's mind was so formed by the piano that he could never think with equal freedom away from it, and, moreover, his music is always most at ease when it is couched in concise and clearly cut forms. 'Le Carnaval', with its quick succession of character studies, the 'Études symphoniques', in which each idea is worked out at once and left for another one, all the sets of short piano pieces, whatever their form or their title, have this in common.

In the quartets as in the piano sonatas, fine as they are, one comes across places where the development of the thought is not quite continuous, where a new idea is introduced a little abruptly or impatiently, or where an old one is reverted to because the form requires a repetition. Schumann's chamber music is at its happiest, and flows most smoothly where the piano is combined with the strings, in the trios (particularly those in D minor and G minor), in his one quartet for piano and strings in E flat, and most of all in the noble quintet for piano and strings in the same key. In such works he is completely at home with his means of expression; the piano supplies the groundwork most congenial to him, and the strings suggest innumerable flights of fancy which carry his imagination forward without a check. They are full of the glowing spirit of romance, yet the spirit expresses itself easily in the well-balanced form of the sonata.

It was this same capacity which Schumann perceived in the early work of Brahms and heralded with his famous article. He found a musical nature as deep as his own, but expressed with a craftsmanship which had been quite impossible to himself at the age of twenty years. Brahms seemed to have all the advantages of Mendelssohn's skill without the dis-

advantages of Mendelssohn's facility. And how had all this come about?

#### LIFE OF BRAHMS

JOHANNES BRAHMS was born at Hamburg on May 7, 1833, and was the son, not of a prosperous Jewish banker, but of a German musician who was anything but prosperous. Johann Jakob Brahms, the father, played two instruments—the horn and the double-bass; and though it is recorded of him that as a young man he had run away from home in order to devote himself to music, there is nothing to suggest that he was a musical genius in the real sense of the term. We have seen so many instances of geniuses who flouted parental authority for the sake of their art, that it is just as well to realize that it is quite possible to flout parental authority without being a genius. In fact, if we could collect the names of all the young people who have insisted on becoming musicians in spite of their parents' wishes, we should realize that those who have afterwards justified themselves by gaining lasting distinction have been very few.

The elder Brahms himself became nothing more than an undistinguished player in the theatre orchestra at Hamburg; but he also became the father of Johannes, and he knew enough of music to give his son such education as was possible. If Brahms had written nothing more than the horn trio we should still be thankful that his father was a horn-player. Throughout his life, whenever he wrote a passage for the horn it was with an intimate knowledge, one might almost say an affection, which was rooted in the memory of his father's playing. Perhaps this is accountable for his persistent clinging to the old natural brass instruments and his dislike of the valve horns (see p. 57).

There is nothing of special moment to record in Brahms's early life. The family was always poor; he got excellent piano teaching from Marxsen, a well-known teacher, but he had to earn a living as soon as possible, and the most obvious way of beginning to do so was to undertake work as accompanist at the theatre where his father played the double-bass. He did a good deal of this, but it was simply 'hack work', for his ambitions

were anything but theatrical. When he got rare opportunities of appearing in public as a pianist he chose the music which he really cared for—Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven—and he made no attempt to startle the multitudes by a brilliant performance, as he might have done, for his powers as a pianist were of the finest.

Not long before his meeting with Schumann, however, his prospects began to open out. He had a chance of touring as accompanist to a clever Hungarian violinist called Remenyi, and in this capacity he travelled to a good many of the towns of Northern Germany. The connexion first brought Brahms into touch with Magyar (Hungarian and Gipsy) music, and that in itself would be a sufficient outcome to make the tour important, when we remember the sets of Hungarian dances which he arranged soon afterwards for piano duet, the last movement of the quartet for piano and strings in G minor, which, like that of Haydn's first trio, is a Gipsy Rondo, and the rhythm of the finale to the violin concerto.

But other consequences followed, for it was on this tour that he came across Joachim at Hanover, and, as we have seen, it was Joachim who sent him to Schumann. Joachim has told us what it was that first showed him the immense possibilities of Brahms's genius. Brahms carried a number of his compositions with him and worked at them assiduously, though there was little possibility of their being heard at such concerts as Remenyi cared to give. Some were shown to Joachim, among them the beautiful song 'Liebestreu' (True love), and its deep and searching melody impressed him at once.

A student cannot do better than begin his knowledge of Brahms with that song. In it you find an epitome of everything which is most characteristic of him. A deep stirring emotion, not violent or passionate but intensely strong, is the chief feature. Brahms's melodies frequently soar over wide-sweeping arpeggio figures, as this does in its first phrase,<sup>1</sup> and the reflection of the melody in the bass of the piano as though one saw it mirrored in deep waters, a suggestion which the words supply

<sup>1</sup> See also *Weit über das Feld*, Op. 3, No. 4.

in this instance, gives that rich sonorousness which was generally more dear to him than vividness of colouring (see p. 47).

We may feel sure that this song was uppermost in Schumann's mind when he spoke of 'songs, whose poetry one would understand without knowing the words, though all are pervaded by a deep song melody'.<sup>1</sup> Schumann also speaks of 'sonatas, more veiled symphonies, single pianoforte pieces, partly demoniacal, of the most graceful form,—then sonatas for violin and piano—quartets for strings—and every one so different from the rest that each seemed to flow from a separate source'.

In this account we can identify the piano sonata, Op. 1, which with its extraordinarily full writing in many parts is almost more than the two hands of any ordinary pianist can be expected to compass, and may well be described as a 'veiled symphony'; also the scherzo in E flat minor, Op. 4, which probably suggested the epithet 'demoniacal'. But the violin sonatas and string quartets have vanished, torn up or burnt by their composer, who had a short way of dealing with whatever of his music seemed to him immature. In the circumstances it is surprising that the sonata for piano and the scherzo survived. Their early publication probably saved them. Once published it was too late for second thoughts, but neither strikes us now as fully representing the mature Brahms. The latter is so like Chopin's second scherzo in B flat minor (Op. 31) in its chief theme<sup>2</sup> that it is worth while to put the two side by side, and to do so shows that Chopin's is far superior in grace of style and understanding of piano effect, though Brahms's has a certain sturdy strength which is foreign to Chopin.

#### EARLY PUBLICATIONS

A glance at the works published in 1853-4, the time when Brahms's friendship with Joachim and the Schumanns was forming itself, will help to fix in mind some more of the main

<sup>1</sup> The quotations are from the English translation of Schumann's article given in Miss Florence May's *Life of Johannes Brahms*, vol. i, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Brahms afterwards said that he did not know Chopin's scherzo when he wrote his own.

characteristics of his art. They include the three piano sonatas (in C, F sharp minor, and F minor) with the set of variations on a theme by Schumann, dedicated to Mme Schumann, with eighteen songs (Opp. 3, 6, and 7).

The sonatas are very significant. The first has for its slow movement a little set of delicate variations on an old German folk-song, 'Blau Blümelein' (Little blue flower). Brahms was tremendously in love with his country's folk-song. In the course of his life he made arrangements for voice and piano of a great many; a set of 'Children's Folk-songs', including 'Das Sandmännchen' (The little sandman), which has become famous, was dedicated soon after to the children of Robert and Clara Schumann. He did not often introduce actual folk melodies into his instrumental works, as in this instance, but his own melodies are constantly charged with the folk-song feeling, and indeed the slow movement of the second sonata (Op. 2) might almost be a development from this same song. The slow movement of the sonata in F minor takes its text not from folk-music but from poetry. Three lines are quoted from Sternau, of which the following is a rough translation :

'The evening falls, the moonlight gleams,  
Two souls are joined in love  
And clasp in a holy embrace.'

Again, Brahms is doing something which was not his usual practice. He scarcely ever in a purely instrumental work gave a verbal clue as to what was passing in his mind.<sup>1</sup> One may find the suggestions of the lines carried out to some extent in the details of the music. The broad yet mysterious first melody conveys the feeling of the evening scene; perhaps the second episode, the two hands alternating, actually pictures the converse of the two lovers; without doubt, the coda welling up to a climax of rich sound in a new key is the expression of a noble and spiritual love.

But this exceptional quotation, like the exceptional use of the

<sup>1</sup> The ballade for piano on the Scottish ballad 'Edward' (Op. 10, No. 1) is another example.

folk-tune in the first sonata, is really a key to a part of Brahms's musical nature. Though he rarely quoted or explained, his music was closely bound up with the thoughts of his own life, the friends he met, the poetry he read, the scenes of nature which he visited. Occasionally the fact would creep out in spite of the instinct which made him withhold the knowledge: we know that over the notes of the slow movement of the piano concerto in D minor he wrote the words, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord'; that the magnificent funeral march which now stands as the second number in the *German Requiem* was thought of as a part of the symphony which he contemplated about the time of Schumann's death; that the variations, Op. 9, contain allusions to the music of both the Schumanns, and are a sort of private document recording their friendship.

Brahms was in fact anything but the abstract musician that many people have supposed him to be. There is a story at the back of all his great works, but it is a personal story, not a dramatic one like the stories of Berlioz or Liszt, and it is told only in music. This accounts for the curious contradictions of the early criticisms of Brahms's music. At one time he would be described as a romantic dreamer, at another as a classical student whose art consisted in attaining a well calculated balance of form. He was both and he was neither. He could dream, but he could also study, and he had a passion for making his dreams come true in his music, that is, for giving them form and substance; but he was no more entirely devoted to form for its own sake than he was to dreams for their own sakes. At first in the piano sonatas you may find a certain amount of struggle going on between the two artistic needs; in the years immediately following their production, when he settled down to the composition of chamber music, they became, as it were, the complement of one another.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN CHAMBER MUSIC

The next few years of Brahms's life after Schumann's death were spent in a variety of activities partly at his father's home

in Hamburg, and partly at Detmold, the capital of a small state between Hanover and Westphalia, then ruled by a Prince, Leopold, who, with his family and small court, was devoted to music of the finest types. An appointment there to teach and play provided the ideal surroundings for Brahms's progress in chamber music, surroundings which, though on a smaller scale, were not unlike those in which Haydn himself had developed the quartet at Esterház (Part II, p. 40).

One might almost say that the small courts of Germany were the making of chamber music, and that their subsequent obliteration in the German Empire destroyed it. At any rate, at this time we see Joachim at Hanover and Brahms at Detmold, the one as violinist, the other as pianist, developing their art by means of the support which these institutions afforded them. At Detmold Brahms took part in all the great chamber music then existing, and in particular deepened his knowledge of Mozart and learnt to know Schubert thoroughly for the first time.

The sextet for strings in B flat (Op. 18) gives clear examples of the influence of both these great masters upon him. Its slow movement, a theme with variations, ought to be compared with the 'Tod und das Mädchen' variations in Schubert's quartet in D minor. The theme itself has a Schubert-like cast of melody and harmony, and the variations, though more complex than Schubert's, bear out the resemblance.

A glance at the final Rondo and a little attention to the way Brahms plays with the cadence figure of the principal theme will show how he absorbed Mozart's methods of development (cf. Part II, p. 89), and yet all through the work there is something which is unmistakably Brahms, that breadth and earnestness which we found in the first of his songs and sonatas, and which, however much it may be softened by a supple grace of movement, never leaves his thought.

The two quartets for piano and strings (Op. 25 in G minor, and Op. 26 in A major) were further products of these years. Brahms took part in the first performance of the G minor quartet at Detmold in 1859; that in A was first played at Hanover two

or three years later. To appreciate the truth of what has been said of the personal story behind Brahms's music, you have only to listen to one or other of these works.

Take, for example, the two middle movements of the quartet in G minor. One is called 'Intermezzo'; the other has no title save its direction of *tempo, Andante con moto*. The Intermezzo is long, with a *trio* which purposely presents no strong contrast of mood, and after the *trio* there is a full repetition of the first part with a *coda*. The violin is muted, the direction 'una corda' is found in the piano part; incessant triplet figures of quavers pervade one part or another, all the melodies contain prominent drooping figures. The whole of the music in fact is in a dim light; the parts interlace delicately like the overhanging branches of trees.

To pass from this subdued beauty to the first melody of the *andante* is like coming from the depths of a wood into the uplands of the open country. The violin and violoncello lead off with a broad melody in octaves which the viola enriches with middle harmonies. The piano part expands into a rolling counterpoint, also in octaves. But this is not the only contrast. The movement stirs, becomes more agitated, more vocal. Notice the incisive string figures above rapid piano arpeggios. Then a new rhythm like the tramp of marching feet comes in the piano part, and soon we find ourselves in the full swing of the march. The tide of human life and energy advances, and though that too passes, it leaves a permanent mark. We cannot return to the complete calm in which the movement opened, and the repetition is scored with a fullness which makes it more vital than the conventional repetition of ternary form.

The two movements, 'Intermezzo' and *andante*, must be taken together if the full emotional value is to be realized, and that is so often the case with Brahms that the habit of applauding between movements is particularly fatal to his works. Remember when you hear them not to make a noise till it is all over.

See how completely free from the conventions as distinct from the principles of form these movements are. One expects at their point in a quartet a slow movement and a *scherzo*. Brahms

gives us neither. The 'Intermezzo' is marked *allegro*, but its subdued feeling makes its emotional place in the scheme nearest to that of the slow movement, while all the qualities of pulsing life which we associate with the idea of a *scherzo* are found in the middle of the *andante*, literally the movement at a walking pace.

Brahms was in fact particularly fond of breaking away from the conventional distinctions of style in his middle movements. He rarely writes a regular *scherzo* in triple time, such as the one in the first sextet; he constantly either chooses some less usual rhythm (such as  $\frac{2}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{8}$ , or  $\frac{8}{8}$ )<sup>1</sup> for his *scherzo* movement, or else alternates two moods producing an entirely new kind of design, as in the second string quartet (Op. 51, No. 2), the string quintet in F (Op. 88), the clarinet quintet.<sup>2</sup> In the first three of his four symphonies an *allegretto* movement of infinite graciousness replaces the *scherzo*.

With the two piano quartets and the great quintet in F minor for piano and strings (Op. 34) he had definitely moulded his musical outlook with the help of his experiences at Detmold, and at the same time he had composed a large quantity of songs and other vocal pieces. The appearance in the list of his works at this time of a number of concerted pieces for women's voices recalls another of his occupations. At Hamburg he conducted a choir of ladies, for whom he wrote the four songs for women's voices with accompaniment for horns and harp, the 'Marienlieder' (Songs of Mary), and other things. And he took particular pleasure in this work.

But his public career was not progressing rapidly. He had made staunch friends in the musical world, and had made some enemies, partly through his own rough carelessness of behaviour. Some of his music had received a good deal of comment, and his Concerto for piano in D minor, his only big orchestral work so far, had been paid the compliment of abuse. It was time for him to undertake some bigger executive work, and to get some

<sup>1</sup> See quintet for piano and strings, Op. 34, string quartet, Op. 51, No. 1, piano quartet in C minor, Op. 60.

<sup>2</sup> The middle movement of the sonata in A for violin and piano (Op. 100) is perhaps the simplest example of this habit for purposes of illustration.

wider experience than merely that of musical life in North Germany.

#### FIRST VISIT TO VIENNA

He was in his thirtieth year when, in the autumn of 1862, he paid his first visit to Vienna. This visit, like Schumann's, was an experiment, but he found more of a welcome than Schumann had found, and indeed he had more to offer. He did not propose to write about music ; it is noticeable that Brahms, unlike most of the great men of the nineteenth century, had no leanings towards criticism or essay writing. The one written document to which he put his name produced such unfortunate results that it naturally confirmed him in his determination to make music rather than words about it.

This document appeared about two years before Brahms's visit to Vienna and deserves mention, for it has some historical importance. It was in fact a manifesto against the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which by this time was a very different paper from what it had been in Schumann's day. It was employed in supporting the ideas of programme music with which Liszt was specially identified, and in so doing it went so far as to assume that practically all musicians of any consequence gave their allegiance to those ideas. This was too much for Brahms and Joachim, whose views, as we have seen, were of a very different kind, and they drew up a short protest, which they invited others to sign with them. Their action helped to foment a sort of party warfare which became a deplorable feature of musical life in Germany, and the ill effects of which are felt in this country even to the present day. You may hear people talk as though 'programme' music and 'classical' music were necessarily opposed, and as though to admire one must be to despise the other. However, we have seen that music is not necessarily interesting because it illustrates some other idea, nor necessarily admirable because it is in sonata form. It is the spirit behind both that matters.

To return, Brahms had learnt not to talk but to act, and when he reached Vienna one of the first actions he offered was his own piano-playing and the quartet in A major. He stayed there

through the winter, and the impression that he and his music created is summed up by the fact that he returned there in the autumn of the next year to take up the post of conductor of the 'Singakademie', one of the chief choral societies of Vienna. This was the beginning of the permanent change of home from North Germany to Vienna, in which Brahms's career is a parallel to Beethoven's, and, as in Beethoven's case, it is almost the only event of salient importance apart from his work itself (cf. Part II, p. 147). Though he did not hold the conductorship for very long he became rooted in Vienna, which he soon learned to love, and had it not been for the existence of railway trains which carried him easily back to Germany for concerts and other musical functions, or to Switzerland and elsewhere for holidays, he would probably have become as immovable as Beethoven did.

#### BRAHMS'S PERSONALITY

But one great difference existed between them. Brahms was before all else a healthy animal. He loved physical exercise and fun, sometimes of a rather rough kind; open-air and cross-country walking, swimming and diving were his favourite pastimes. A description of him as he appeared on one of his holidays, farthest from Vienna, at Saronitz on the shores of the Baltic, gives the outside of his personality in a few words:

'Brahms is looking splendid. His solid frame, the healthy, dark-brown colour of his face, the full hair, just a little sprinkled with grey, all make him appear the very image of strength and vigour. He walks about here just as he pleases, generally with his waistcoat unbuttoned and his hat in his hand, always with clean linen, but without collar or necktie. These he dons at *table d'hôte* only. His whole appearance vividly recalls some portraits of Beethoven.'<sup>1</sup>

Beethoven was sturdy in spite of his ill health; Brahms was sturdy because of his abounding good health. This description was made in 1876, the year of the production of Brahms's first

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Henschel's diary of 'Personal Recollections of Johannes Brahms', read before the Royal Institution of Great Britain, June 2, 1905, and subsequently published by that society.

symphony at Karlsruhe, and when you hear the leaping strength of that symphony's first subject and the triumphant climax of its finale you can recall that description and see how fully he put himself into his music.

#### CHORAL WORKS AND SYMPHONIES

It is time to say a word about Brahms's symphonies. We have seen him developing through the early piano music to concerted chamber music. When, his friends wondered, would he go a step farther and, as Schumann had said, 'sink his magic staff in the region where the capacity of masses in chorus and orchestra can lend him its powers'. In the years after he reached Vienna, he went on producing one fine chamber work after another. The strongly poetical horn trio was played for the first time in 1865, and the first of the three existing string quartets was composed the next year. At about this time he also began to turn to choral composition on a larger scale than the early works for women's voices. His mother died in 1865, and the composition of the *Requiem*, parts of which had long been in mind, was definitely undertaken. The Rhapsody for alto voice, male chorus, and orchestra to words by Goethe, the 'Schicksalslied' (Song of fate) for mixed choir and orchestra, and the 'Triumphlied' followed in fairly rapid succession. The last, for double chorus, soli, and orchestra, was composed to celebrate the victories of the Franco-Prussian War and the establishment of the German Empire under the Kaiser Wilhelm I. It is significant that it alone of Brahms's larger choral works has found small favour in England. It is hardly likely to do so now.

Still Brahms delayed to write anything of consequence for the orchestra alone. A letter which he wrote before his first visit to Vienna tells us that he was even then engaged upon the symphony in C minor, but that was fourteen years before it was actually produced. He was always tremendously conscientious about his work, sometimes inclined to become conscience-ridden over it. Majestic and splendid as the first symphony is, one cannot help feeling that he allowed himself too much reflection

in the shaping of it. The first movement has some of the struggling insistence upon themes which made the piano concerto in D minor seem incomprehensible when it was first written. One grows up to the admiration of both of them, but neither has the clear spontaneous style which makes the first movement of the second symphony immediately lovable.

And here we may notice that having achieved one symphony with apparent difficulty, Brahms almost immediately wrote another with the utmost ease. His works often appear in pairs. The two piano quartets (Opp. 25 and 26), the two string quartets (Op. 51), the two overtures called the 'Academic' and the 'Tragic' are other examples, and the pairs are always strongly contrasted. In no case do they represent a wish to repeat a success or to say the same thing over again, but having used a form for one purpose, the experience quickly suggested something else which might be done with it.

The symphonies of Brahms grow as naturally out of his style in chamber music as Haydn's symphonies grow from his string quartet. They are not, like the symphonies of Berlioz, the outcome of the elaborate technique of the modern orchestra. Certain passages, it is true, belong undeniably to the instruments which play them. Compare the two *allegretto* movements of the first and second symphonies and you find that the tune of the first belongs as unmistakably to the liquid tone of the clarinet as that of the second to the plaintive chirp of the oboe. Imagine the instruments transposed and you see that both would be spoilt. But in these and similar instances Brahms is using the instruments individually just as they would be used in chamber music, as he did in fact use the clarinet in the quintet, the trio, and the two sonatas which he wrote later for it.

In passages for the full orchestra or for many instruments the qualities of sound are much less closely considered. The sound of the orchestra was not his main object; sometimes he could be almost careless about it so long as the lines of the melodic development were clearly expressed. Wherever an instrument is acting as an individual it is sure to be perfectly disposed in Brahms's scores; when it is one of a crowd its place may not

be so appropriate. Berlioz and Wagner both managed their orchestral crowds perfectly, and so, placed beside them, Brahms's orchestration seems elementary. But Berlioz's idea of a symphonic design seems far more elementary when it is placed beside Brahms's, because Berlioz had never had the opportunity which chamber music had given to Brahms of thinking purely and simply in musical terms.

The first symphony raised almost as much discussion as the early piano concerto had done. Unfortunately by this time the two terms classic and modern were considered to be as much opposed as they are in the life of an English public school, and Brahms was looked upon as the champion of the former against the latter. While one side thought the symphony a masterpiece the other would see no good in it, and some of its friends in a misguided wish to praise it to the skies christened it the 'tenth symphony', meaning, of course, that it was a successor to Beethoven's ninth. It is only necessary to put the principal tune of the finale of Brahms's first symphony beside that of the finale of the choral symphony to see that the two are very alike. Brahms himself said, 'Any fool could see that,' but also any one who is not a fool realizes that it is an absolutely distinct creation. Though Beethoven's works were among the strongest and most abiding influences in Brahms's life he never reproduced their manner or their matter in his own music. This very movement is the strongest example of the free hand which Brahms could give himself when he chose in the matter of form. A conventionally minded musician would have blazed this tune out in a final recapitulation for full orchestra; Brahms uses it only as a starting-point, and the ecstatic climax reached in the coda merely alludes to its rhythm without repeating it formally. The whole movement, from the mysterious introduction with its solemn horn call and the agitated pizzicato passages for strings, to this climax, has the vividness of graphic programme music, but its features are welded into an ideal shape. Again we feel the human story at the back of the music.

In the years after the production of the first two symphonies Brahms's life only altered in the fact that the wide recognition

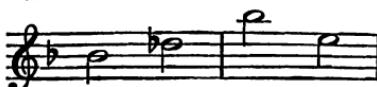
of his choral and orchestral works brought him more into touch with the outside world. He was invited to many places to conduct performances, and he travelled a good deal in Germany for this purpose. He never came to England, though he once nearly consented to do so on the invitation of Cambridge University, which wished to give him an honorary degree. His first symphony, however, came to represent him, and was conducted there by Joachim in the year after it was first heard at Karlsruhe.

The genial 'Academic' overture, a work built up round popular student songs, was written for a similar occasion—the presentation of an honorary degree at Breslau at the beginning of 1881. A very different occasion, the unveiling of a monument to Schumann at Bonn in the year before, may have had some connexion with the composition of its companion overture called the 'Tragic'.

These years were filled with big compositions. There was the violin concerto written for Joachim and first performed by him at Leipzig, and the violin sonata in G (1879), and he also launched out into a new phase of music for the piano alone in the Capricci and Intermezzi published as Op. 76 and the two Rhapsodies (Op. 79).

The third and fourth symphonies (No. 3 in F and No. 4 in E minor) form another pair a few years later, and again they offer a very remarkable contrast of design. No. 3 leaps into existence with a tremendous exuberance. Like the month of March it comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. In its last movement it sinks away in a diminuendo to a pianissimo, and this quiet ending is definitely connected with the exuberant first movement by the use of a quotation from it.

Ex. 20.



The fourth symphony, on the other hand, opens with almost repressed quietude, using only a small orchestra, which is increased in the later movements much as Beethoven's orchestra

was increased in the fifth symphony (see Part II, p. 172). It ends in a majestic passacaglia, or ground bass (see Part I, pp. 73, 83-5, 122), summing up all Brahms's tremendous power of varying and decorating a simple but powerful theme.

There have been many people who have complained that this last of Brahms's symphonic finales is 'dry'—a return to an old-fashioned form made for the sake of showing what can be done with it. The complaint is only possible if the movement is separated from its context; taken in connexion with the mysterious first movement, the brooding tenderness of the slow movement, and the jovial outburst of the scherzo, its stalwart splendour is found to be the necessary complement of these various phases of emotion.

That is the main thing to be learnt about Brahms. His works must be heard as wholes. He rarely insisted upon the fact by making the movements continuous or quoting ideas from one movement in a later one, though the third symphony, the violin sonata in G, and the clarinet quintet give instances of such quotation. But however various the ideas might be they were always parts of a whole wide range of expression. The details of his style are often so interesting intellectually that they tempt one to analyse his music, but it is only safe to begin to do so when you have first grasped something of the whole trend of the work.

We have said nothing in detail of the concertos, of the later chamber works, including two quintets for strings, the trios and sonatas for stringed instruments with the piano, and the series of works for the clarinet with strings, inspired by the playing of Mühlfeld, the fine clarinetist of the Meiningen orchestra. The object of our study, here as elsewhere, has been to get an idea of the distinctive place held by the composer in the musical development of his time, and this is harder in the case of Brahms than in that of Berlioz, whose work was bound up with a certain new type of expression, or that of Wagner, who revolutionized another type. Brahms was neither a pioneer nor a revolutionary; he was, like Bach, merely the most mighty wielder of the forces which his time had inherited. When he died, on

April 3, 1897, a great period of music came to an end. He had held to an ideal of his own, which in many respects ran counter to the ideals of his most powerful contemporaries ; but he had entirely justified that ideal in his long series of concerted works which closed with the clarinet quintet, because he had proved that to be true to it was the only way for him to say what it was in him to say. The personal story at the back of his music remains to the last, and in the clarinet quintet, the last piano pieces, songs, and particularly the set of organ chorales published after his death, one finds a spirit of restful gravity, the spirit in which a man having finished his life's work prepares to lay down his tools.

#### CÉSAR FRANCK

We will turn to another of our list of music's strong men (see p. 11), one whom so far we have not considered at all. It may have been a surprise to some to find César Franck in a list which included neither Grieg nor Dvořák. If it is remembered that that list represented not so much its members' own achievements as their influence upon others the surprise vanishes. Certainly none of Franck's teachers or contemporaries at the Paris Conservatoire were disposed to magnify his abilities ; no Schumann trumpeted his coming at the age of twenty to a surprised world. Indeed, at that age there was nothing to trumpet about ; all that happened was that Franck quietly left the Paris Conservatoire, having completed a serious course of study and won some prizes, but without even competing for the famous *Prix de Rome*, which Berlioz in his day had won so hardly.

CÉSAR FRANCK was born at Liège on December 10, 1822, that is to say, rather more than ten years before Brahms, and less than ten years after Wagner was born. He came of a family of Belgian artists who traced their connexion with the art of painting back to the middle of the sixteenth century, and his father, seeing that his son had talent in another direction, fostered the talent and had him educated in music first at home, then in Paris. He entered the Paris Conservatoire, which still had Cherubini at its head in 1837, and worked there for five

years, so that he was a music student through just those eventful years when Berlioz's big works won public recognition (see p. 64), when Liszt was at the height of his reputation as a public pianist, and Wagner was there longing for his chance and staving off starvation by arranging cornet solos. Franck must then have been impressed by the orchestration of Berlioz as well as by the brilliant piano style of Liszt. The dedication of an early trio for piano and strings '*à son ami Franz Liszt*', composed in 1842, shows that not only Liszt's music but some personal kindness earned Franck's regard. On leaving the Conservatoire, however, Franck went home for a time, and for two years was away from the main streams of musical life. During this time a good many compositions, chiefly for the piano, but some of them for piano and stringed instruments, were written. None of them, however, are the works by which he has become permanently known, and some still remain in manuscript.

In 1844 he returned to Paris, where practically the whole of his subsequent life was spent. Again the date is significant; by this time Berlioz had started on his journeys through Europe, and Paris was for the time being relieved from his campaign of modern music. The death of Cherubini, on the other hand, had broken the link with the older classical ideals. One might suppose it to be the right moment for the expression of a new voice, but Franck was by no means ready to step into any position of authority. His music was still small in amount, and still tentative in purpose. An oratorio, *Ruth*, was composed and performed for the first time in 1846, the same year in which Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was produced at Birmingham. And this followed closely upon the production of a rather similar work called *Le Désert* (The Desert), which was composed by another Parisian musician, Félicien David, and which because of its use of certain melodies imported from the East had aroused considerable interest.

*Ruth* is important as the beginning of a new phase of French oratorio in which Franck excelled at a later time with a greater work, *Les Béatitudes* (The Beatitudes). But throughout the next twenty-five years his life was as uneventful as any active

musician's life could well be. It was spent in a regular round of teaching broken only by rare concert performances of his own music. In 1858 he became organist of the church of St. Clotilde, and this post he held for forty-two years until his death in 1890. Many of his organ works were written down after they had been improvised in the services at St. Clotilde, and in this Franck is like his English contemporary S. S. Wesley. Almost all his works written between the time of his appointment and 1870 are organ music or church music for voices with the organ.

The year 1870 is as critical a date in the fortunes of Franck as it was in those of his adopted country. Probably the Franco-German war was directly responsible for the fact that in that year he was naturalized as a French citizen. How far it was responsible for the fact that from then onwards appeared all the works of chamber and orchestral music which have made him the apostle of French art one cannot say precisely, but the influence of politics upon the reception of his music has certainly been great. It was in 1870 that he wrote *Les Béatitudes*; two years later he became first organ professor at the Conservatoire, and another work for chorus and orchestra, *Redemption*, followed in 1874. His richest period of composition began with 'Les Éolides', a symphonic poem for orchestra after a poem by de Lisle (1876). The quintet for piano and strings in F minor (1878-9) was followed by 'Le Chasseur maudit', a symphonic poem for orchestra after Bürger (1882); 'Les Djinns', another symphonic poem, after Victor Hugo, with a solo part for the piano, and the 'Prélude, Choral et Fugue' for piano, appeared in 1884, and *Hulda*, an opera in four acts, with the 'Variations symphoniques' for piano and orchestra, were completed in 1885. Still his activity increased: the sonata for violin and piano, and the 'Prélude, Aria et Finale', a companion work to the 'Prélude, Choral et Fugue', belong to the year 1886, when he began the Symphony in D minor, which was completed two years later. One more large chamber work, the string quartet in D, was written in 1889, and these last years contain also a number of vocal and organ works.

*In his manner of development Franck reminds us of an earlier*

French musician, J. P. Rameau (see Part II, p. 118), who had lived a busy life of teaching, organ playing, and theoretical work before he arrived at his period of composition. But Franck did not leap into fame; while he lived he never reached any wider fame than the admiration and devotion of his pupils and the comparatively small circle of friends who gathered round him. Rameau reached fame because he took up the composition of opera, which happened to be the form of art most congenial to his countrymen. Franck, though he wrote an opera, had little real sympathy with the stage; his quiet life at the organ and his own retiring temperament disposed him towards the more reflective types of music.

M. Vincent d'Indy, a distinguished French composer of to-day, and foremost amongst Franck's admiring pupils, has spoken of him as 'the genius of improvisation', and that seems to be the first principle of Franck's music. He wrote down his musical thoughts as they occurred to him, and whether they occurred as the result of impressions created by a poem, or as purely musical ideas such as those of the sonata and the quintet, made little difference to his attitude of mind. His music seems at once reflective and impulsive, but this did not prevent his exercising a great deal of thought over matters of form and expression. While he improvised he still took pains to correct his impressions so as to present them with complete clearness. M. d'Indy has drawn another picture of him, sitting before his music paper with a pencil in one hand and a piece of india-rubber in the other. It seems exactly to represent his method of work. The pencil enabled him to put down his thoughts with an unpremeditated spontaneity, the india-rubber allowed him the privilege of second thoughts whenever they came to him. In this his way of working was very much the same as that displayed in the sketch-books of Beethoven (see Part II, p. 150), save that he most frequently obliterated his discarded ideas instead of leaving them for the instruction of students.

These characteristics help to account for the miscellany of the list of his works, a very incomplete one, which has been given. He hardly ever composed twice for the same combination of

instruments. He left only one work called a sonata, one string quartet, one quintet, and one symphony. In this he contrasts with Brahms, who we have seen constantly followed a work of one kind with another in the same kind. Compared with the output of Brahms, Franck's seems a mere handful, but his best things make a handful of masterpieces.

#### FRANCK'S TREATMENT OF FORM

Before we draw direct comparisons between the music of Franck and of Brahms, a few words about Franck's treatment of musical form are necessary. In approaching the composition of pure music, that is to say, music apart from drama and words, Franck was neither guided nor hindered by established traditions to the extent that German musicians necessarily were. He had not behind him the same influence to urge him to the direct continuance or extension of sonata form. The music of Paris was in the middle of the nineteenth century almost completely the music of the opera save for the sudden ebullition of descriptive orchestral music for which Berlioz was responsible. Orchestral concerts were few, chamber music scarcely existed. Franck as an organist knew his Bach well and revelled in the depths of his polyphony; he studied the scores of Beethoven, and was particularly attracted by the last quartets in which Beethoven himself breaks away from his own older standards of balance displayed in the earlier sonatas, quartets, and symphonies. Clearly, he felt, something else is possible. A richly polyphonic style might be evolved in which melodic ideas should be varied, extended, and decorated without necessarily displaying the features of exposition, development, and recapitulation, or dwelling upon definite contrasts of key.

His first trio, for piano, violin, and violoncello, begins with a movement which never definitely modulates at all; it merely changes its mode from the minor to the major and back again. He had a natural love of melodies which circulate round a single note, as the following one from his first trio does :

## Ex. 21.



And, consequently, modulation of key, which means the contrast of one tonal centre with another, was a secondary consideration to him. In the instance just given his melody circulates round the note F sharp diatonically, that is to say, using it as the keynote and making the intervals of the tune move through those of the scale of F sharp. In his later works he more frequently made his melodies circulate chromatically, involving a temporary modulation. But this modulation comes in as an incident rather than as an essential part of his design. The following example from the quintet gives a typical instance of his melody circulating chromatically round a single note (E flat) :

## Ex. 22.



## FRANCK AND BRAHMS CONTRASTED

Contrast this with an equally typical tune by Brahms; the slow movement of the violin concerto will serve for example :

## Ex. 23.



Here the whole form depends upon the opposition of two key centres, the tonic and dominant of the key of F. It moves round these, and the transition from one to the other is a main source of that feeling of balance which the whole tune gives. What is true of short measures of melody is equally true of their more extended forms. The reason that Brahms so constantly adheres to the outlines of sonata form is that the contrasts of key were always to him an essential part of design, and, as we saw at an early stage of our study, the sonata grew largely out of the need for such contrasts (see Part I, pp. 58 and 59).

Franck built up his larger forms chiefly by showing other relationships than those of key between his melodic ideas. He very constantly reintroduces the themes from one movement into a later one, sometimes altering their rhythm, as the writers of programme music of his time constantly did, but more often preserving their form very much as it first appeared but showing some new and subtle connexion between melodies freshly introduced and those from which he started.

If you analyse the sonata for violin and piano you will find a constant recurrence of melodies through its four movements, and in the last those which occur prominently in the earlier ones are summed up by their connexion with the broad and splendid tune which both instruments play in canon. The same kind of treatment is found in both the quintet and the symphony, and though the main features of sonata form are preserved in all three, those features are not really their basis of design.

A comparison of Franck's violin sonata with Brahms's violin sonata in G makes the difference quite clear. There is a certain likeness because Brahms here adopts the rather unusual plan for him of giving some points of actual connexion between the several movements. The repeated notes of the first theme are a suggestion of the main theme of the final movement, and that itself is quoted from the melody of two of his songs (Op. 59, 3 and 4). Again, the slow movement is referred to in the course of the last movement, so that here we have a distinct suggestion of Franck's way of gradually accumulating ideas. But it remains only a suggestion. In Franck's sonata the ideas are so closely

interwoven that the movements are scarcely intelligible taken separately.

Franck's style is at its freest and best in instrumental works which are independent of the sonata idea: the two great solo pieces for the piano 'Prélude, Choral et Fugue' and 'Prélude, Aria et Finale', where he varies his themes and combines them with an extraordinary fantasy; the 'Variations symphoniques', where a single idea is treated decoratively by piano and orchestra, and its companion 'Les Djinns', which, though it has the poetic basis of Victor Hugo, is musically a piece of free variation. In the writing for the piano in these works one finds reflections of the decorative style of Liszt; the orchestral writing has some of the brilliance of Berlioz, but there is also a depth and musical purpose which neither of those masters possessed.

#### FRANCK'S INFLUENCE ON HIS SUCCESSORS

César Franck's attitude of mind expressed in these ways has been an inspiring force to the musicians of his own and of his adopted country. Since his day both Belgium and France have produced a wealth of chamber music which has included many beautiful and permanent works; before him neither seemed capable of an independent style of musical thought apart from words or drama.<sup>1</sup> Many of these musicians were his own pupils:

<sup>1</sup> Among the composers of French opera in the mid nineteenth century too numerous for mention here, one, CHARLES GOUNOD (1818-93), may be taken as typical, because two of his operas, *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*, with certain choral works such as *The Redemption*, *Mors et Vita*, and the *Messe solennelle*, have reached extraordinary popularity in this country. Born in Paris, Gounod was contemporary with Franck at the Conservatoire, and went to Italy as holder of the Prix de Rome (cf. Berlioz, p. 62). It was the *Messe solennelle* which first brought him to England (1851), and certain of his choral works, including *The Redemption* produced at the Birmingham Festival (1882), were written for the English public, and influenced by the prevailing taste for sacred choral music in this country. He was responsible for founding the choir now known as the Royal Choral Society, which under Barnby and Bridge performed *The Redemption* annually at the Albert Hall through many years. A certain reaction against the cloying sweetness of his style has been felt in the later and more robust taste of both France and England. The opera *Faust* (1859) still holds the stage, however, and is likely to do so, for in its way it is a masterly piece of musical dramatization. It may be taken as typical of the ideals of French opera before either the influence of Wagner was felt in Paris or the stiffening of the national temper against that influence reasserted itself in the works of a younger generation, of which Alfred Bruneau's *L'Attaque du Moulin* (1893) and Gustave Charpentier's *Louise* (1900) are the outcome.

such men as Vincent d'Indy, who has set himself definitely to carry on Franck's ideas in the teaching of the music school in Paris known as the *Schola Cantorum*; Paul Dukas, who is best known in England by his orchestral scherzo 'L'Apprenti sorcier'; Ernest Chausson and Guillaume Lekeu, both of whom died young, but not before they had produced remarkably beautiful chamber music.

Though Franck was the strongest figure in the new birth of French instrumental music he was not alone. Édouard Lalo (1823-92) and Camille Saint-Saëns (b. 1835) both produced symphonies at almost the same time that Franck produced his, and the latter has written music in every form for instruments with a profusion which Franck never reached. Judged by quantity Saint-Saëns would certainly have the first place amongst the French composers of instrumental music of the nineteenth century, but varied and delightful as his works are, they have not the strength of individuality which made Franck's work one of the big forces in the growth of music.

Since Franck's day the music of France has passed into yet another phase which is mainly represented for us by the music of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. Here Franck's influence is indirect, but we can see that what has been said as to his music being based upon melody circulating round a single centre applies to some extent to these newer composers. With them it is carried to the stage at which contrasts of key are often obliterated altogether. Debussy's favourite use of a scale of six whole tones has this effect, but that is only one instance of this obliteration. Their music is outside the scope of this volume, but it is worth while to see that the fascinating developments of the music of France which occupy so much attention at the present time have their roots in the soil which Franck ploughed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI

1. Compare the two slow movements of Brahms's piano sonatas, Opp. 1-2, as instances of the use of folk-song quotation and of folk-song feeling. [See also Brahms's editions of folk-songs mentioned in illustrations to Chapter I.]

## CHAMBER MUSIC AND THE SYMPHONY 157

2. Play slow movement of *Sonata*, Op. 5, as an instance of Brahms's reference to an underlying 'programme'.
3. Compare slow movement of Brahms's sextet in B flat with Schubert's 'Der Tod und das Mädchen' variations.
4. Contrast the two middle movements of the piano quartet in G minor.
5. The four symphonies of Brahms arranged by himself for piano duet make excellent material for illustration. The allegretto movements of symphonies I and II should be compared.
6. The theme of the finale to Brahms's first symphony should be compared with that of Beethoven's ninth; their likeness and differences noted. The whole form of Brahms's finale should be analysed.
7. Franck's sonata for violin and piano and Brahms's in G should be played side by side and contrasted.
8. Franck's 'Prélude, Choral et Fugue' or his 'Prélude, Aria et Finale' for piano should be played to show his evolution of new designs based on the polyphony of Bach.
9. A number of Franck's melodies should be played in succession to show their 'circulating' movement either diatonic or chromatic.  
[The orchestral tone-poems as well as the organ pieces are obtainable in piano duet versions.]

### BOOKS FOR REFERENCE

1. *Chamber Music: a Treatise for Students*, by T. F. Dunhill. (Macmillan.)  
[Shows clearly the principles of chamber music as distinguished from orchestral music.]
2. *Life of Johannes Brahms*, by Florence May. (Arnold.)  
[Gives the details of Brahms's life more fully than any other book in the English language.]
3. *Brahms*, by J. A. Fuller-Maitland. (Methuen.)  
[The most complete critical study of Brahms's music.]
4. *Brahms*, by the author of this volume. (John Lane.)  
[Touches in a small space upon the features of each of the principal works.]
5. *César Franck*, by Vincent D'Indy, translated by Mrs. Newmarch.  
[Is at present the only book in the English language devoted to Franck's life and work.]
6. *French Music in the Nineteenth Century*, by Arthur Hervey. (Grant Richards.)  
[Gives a critical survey of the chief musicians of France throughout the period.]

## CHAPTER VII

### NATIONAL IDEALS

WE have now suggested something of the places held by nine out of the ten men whom we took as typical figures in the music of the nineteenth century. Tchaikovsky is separated from the others by belonging to a country which until his day had never exerted any distinct influence upon the music of Europe as a whole. It was through Tchaikovsky's work that Russia began to exert an influence which is still increasing, and that is why we have taken his name as representative of the Russian school of composers.

But before we begin to consider Tchaikovsky and his compatriots a few words about the idea of national music, illustrated by the work of one or two of its chief exponents outside Russia, will be helpful. There is scarcely any subject connected with music which is more in need of clear thought at the present day, but it is quite easy to understand it if you turn to the historical facts. Misleading arguments about it come from two opposite points of view, and are all the more misleading because both have an element of truth behind them. On the one hand, it is said that music must speak in the language of the country where it was born ; on the other, it is urged that the language of music is common to at least all European countries, so why be at such pains to distinguish between them ? The two seem to be direct contradictions, but that is due to using the metaphor of language wrongly. The real distinction between the music of different European countries is not one of language but of thought and feeling showing itself in a different use of the same musical language.

Take a simple illustration, not from music but from the speech of the people of these islands. They are practically all used to

talking the same language, but an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman talk it in very different ways. If they are simple folk they will differ so much in the actual expressions used that they will hardly be able to understand one another. If they are educated people actual differences of expression in the construction of sentences will hardly appear, but their differences of thought become more marked. Ask an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman for a piece of information, and you generally find that the Englishman will tell it to you shortly and expect you to understand it whether he puts it clearly or not ; the Irishman will put his answer quite neatly, but will not care very much whether you grasp it or not ; the Scotsman will take great pains to make you understand, as much on his own account as on yours. That is because in each case you are dealing with a different kind of mind, and similar differences of mind appear in the music of different nations, even though they are all using the same musical language.

The place of folk-melody in cultivated music is very much like the use of dialect expressions in speech. A more or less primitive people naturally begins to develop its music out of its native song. It uses the actual phrases and rhythms of such melodies because they most naturally express the people's way of thought. As it grows up it sheds these provincialisms, but it does not lose its characteristic way of thought. The modern French composers, for example, those whom we just mentioned at the end of the last chapter, show scarcely any influence of folk-melody at all, but they are no less distinctively French on that account. It only becomes more difficult to lay a finger on the exact quality in their music which is French ; in fact, it is not a matter of language but of tone of mind.

#### DVOŘÁK AND GRIEG

In Dvořák and Grieg we get two clear examples, one in the south and the other in the north of Europe, of composers who set themselves consciously to express their national tones of mind. To do this they had to begin by reverting to what may be called a musical dialect.

EDWARD GRIEG was born at Bergen in Norway in 1843, and he studied music at Leipzig from 1858 to 1862. He was therefore very fully grounded in the German tradition of music as it had been carried on by Mendelssohn and Schumann. There were, however, influences nearer home: the poetry and drama of Ibsen, to whose *Peer Gynt* he supplied incidental music which has become one of his most popular works, did for him very much what the German poets did for Schumann; moreover, like Chopin, he belonged to a country which possessed a very distinct kind of folk-music of its own, and the intervals and rhythms of Norwegian folk-melody were to him a native dialect which pervaded his whole imagination.

If you compare Grieg's lyric pieces for the piano with Schumann's short piano pieces you will find certain very strong likenesses of style, the first of the lyric pieces, for example, might almost have been written by the composer of the 'Kinder-scenen' and 'Fantasiestücke'; but whenever Grieg ventures upon a more decisive melody the likeness of general form and style to Schumann goes into the background. The 'Ballade' (Op. 65, No. 5) and its companion 'The Wedding Day' (Op. 65, No. 6) represent him in two quite different moods and each of them quite foreign to any music of the Leipzig school. The kind of melody, as we saw in the case of Chopin, at once induces new kinds of harmonic movement. In 'The Wedding Day' you will find such chords as the added sixth, the augmented triad, and various positions of the chord of the ninth insisted on strongly, and, as the following example shows (Ex. 24), they are the result of combining melodies. In such things Grieg is anything but free from foreign influence, and it is practically impossible for any music of the present day to be free from the influence of its predecessors and contemporaries, whether native or foreign. Such influence, however, to composers who have their own point of view based on the tradition of their country's thought and feeling is real education; when it is used by composers who have not that foundation, it becomes merely superficial teaching. In this example, Grieg's musical idea, a repetition of a short syncopated phrase, seems elementary,

and his music on the whole has a suggestion of provincialism from his way of insisting strongly upon his native turns of musical speech. He contrasts with Chopin in this, for Chopin welds his suggestions from Polish melody with an art which brings it into consonance with the forms and manners of a larger world.

Ex. 24.

What Grieg did for the music of Norway, Dvořák did with greater directness for the music of Bohemia. In his case the development of a distinct national style in music was part of a social reaction against the swamping of Bohemian nationality by Austrian imperialism. Dvořák was not the first apostle of his country's music. Friedrich Smetana, composer of a number of operas and of a remarkably fine series of symphonic poems for orchestra,<sup>1</sup> had preceded him, and by the time that Dvořák was growing up, a national opera-house, under Smetana's direction, had been founded in Prague.

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK was born in 1841 and was given some schooling first at Zlonitz, and afterwards at a German school at

<sup>1</sup> One of Smetana's operas, known by its German title *Die verkaufte Braut*, has been given in England, and its brilliant overture is frequently played. Of the symphonic poems the one most often heard is 'Ultava'.

Kamnitz. His early life in some ways was like that of Haydn, for his father was comparatively poor, and the education that he got was only of an elementary kind. He entered an organ school at Prague in 1857, however, and while he was there supported himself by playing the viola in a town band. A few years later, when the Bohemian theatre was opened, his band was employed for occasional music, and in 1866, when that theatre became a regular opera-house under Smetana's direction, Dvořák became a member of its orchestra. His compositions in early years were rather divided between his enthusiasm for national music, stimulated by Smetana's example, and his admiration for Wagner, whose style he tried to emulate in at least one opera. But he soon saw the truth that Wagner's style was the result of his own genius, and that what he could learn from it was the lesson of self-reliance.

Dvořák's intimate acquaintance with the orchestra as a player gave him a wonderfully sure hand in writing for it, and he had written several symphonies, some music for strings, and chamber music before his powers received any public acknowledgement. The event which most brought him into the light was his offer of compositions to compete for a grant from the Austrian government.

It is interesting to remember that Brahms was concerned in the award, and that although Brahms was not particularly ready in his appreciation of music with other ideals than his own he quickly saw the genius of Dvořák's work. It was due to him that Simrock, the publisher, accepted Dvořák's music and asked for more; in response to that request the Slavonic dances for piano duet were written, and gained a popularity almost as great as Brahms's Hungarian dances. Brahms also used his influence to suggest to Dvořák the study and composition of chamber music. So in Dvořák's quartets and other chamber works one finds again a certain strong foreign influence, but a thoroughly healthy one. The general form of the sonata type which the Germans had developed is adopted by Dvořák, but, as in the case of Grieg, the type of melody and the texture of the harmony come from his own national spirit.

Ex. 25.

These two bars from the first movement of the string quartet in E flat, Op. 51, give a glimpse of Dvořák's style. The second violin and viola are playing in octaves a tune which has already appeared as the second subject of the movement in regular sonata form. The violoncello accompanies with a strong figure which is obviously derived from the tune itself, and above, the first violin trips along with a dancing tune in a rhythm which is very prevalent throughout the movement. The counterpoint itself is ingenious, yet it is so simple that it requires no mental effort to appreciate it. It has the genial ease of Haydn, who, like Dvořák, came from the southern Slav races, and this quality separates both Haydn and Dvořák from the Germans, whose counterpoint is more profoundly earnest and less smooth-running.

This quartet is one of the instances where Dvořák used the word 'Dumka'<sup>1</sup> to describe the slow movement. The word is best translated as 'lament', and used in the music of his country, it means a short piece of a persistently sorrowful kind.<sup>2</sup> The drooping melody of this 'Dumka', with the accompaniment thrumbed on the strings of the violoncello, suggests a dirge sung by a peasant singer to the accompaniment of a guitar or similar instrument.

<sup>1</sup> The *Dumky* Trio, Op. 90, for piano and strings, is composed of a series of such movements.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the old English 'Dump', a melancholy slow movement frequently found in Elizabethan instrumental music, and alluded to ironically by Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Sc. v.

Ex. 26.

*Andante.*

Observe that the 'Dumka' alternates with a Vivace, and that the merry tune of the latter is a transformation from the sad theme of the 'Dumka'.

Ex. 27.

*Vivace.*

This method of contrast seems to be taken from Brahms's example (see p. 140), but again the influence from outside appears only in the manner and not in the matter of the music. Another title and manner of expression which he adopted from his country's music was the Furiant. The very title suggests wildness, and the Furiant is really a scherzo of an exceptionally unfettered and vigorous kind. Both the Dumka and the Furiant can be studied in those written for the piano alone (Opp. 12, 35, and 42).

Everything which Dvořák had to say was said with that simple clarity of expression which turns readily from one strong emotion to another without apparent premeditation. When he combined contrasting rhythms, as he often did, it was without the intellectual questioning which both Schumann and Brahms bestowed on such things; it was done for beauty of colour or sheer charm of effect. He could pour out his heart in a phrase of melody, such as the second theme of the beautiful violoncello concerto, without either reserve or affectation, and perhaps no one of the nineteenth-century composers came so near to that childlike attitude of musical devotion which belonged to the composers of the older world. That was partly because Dvořák remained through life a simple Bohemian peasant in spite of travels abroad.

Unlike Brahms, he willingly visited English musical festivals and composed choral music for them. Cambridge made him a Doctor of Music; his own university of Prague made him a Doctor of Philosophy; New York beckoned him across the Atlantic to preside over a 'National Conservatory' of music. But no amount of academic honour could alter his attitude of mind or turn him into a sophisticated composer, even though he sometimes wrote works which were below his own high level of spontaneity.

His most popular symphony, 'From the New World,' the quartet in F, Op. 95, and the quintet in E flat, Op. 94, were products of his visit to America. In 'The New World' symphony Dvořák has caught the flavour of the half-merry, half-mournful negro melodies or 'coon songs' of America. He strenuously denied that he had actually quoted any of them,<sup>1</sup> though you will often see it stated in print that it is more or less made up of borrowed tunes of the kind. If 'The New World' symphony is not the best of Dvořák it is still very good, and it happens to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. H. Hadow visited Dvořák in Bohemia soon after his return from America and the production of the symphony 'From the New World'. Newspaper critics had commented on his use of negro tunes, but he declared emphatically, 'There is not one'. The second subject of the first movement is sufficiently like the 'Jubilee' song, 'Swing low, sweet chariot,' to be accepted as a quotation, but careful analysis will show that this is the only example of the kind.

be the work with which most people in England begin their knowledge of him at present. The scherzo, which is least Americanized, is most characteristic of him in its vigorous use of short and impulsive rhythmic phrases.

Dvořák's last works were some orchestral Ballades on folk legends, but it is interesting to notice that the greater part of his instrumental music claimed no reference to a story of any kind, as one might naturally expect from a composer whose sympathies were so intimately bound up with the scenes and legends, the art and the poetry of his native country. The existence of the national opera-house in Prague was probably the cause of this. When he had a story to tell, the stage was there to tell it for him in the unmistakable way which music alone can never achieve. He wrote nine operas, and most of them have been frequently given there, but not elsewhere. His choral works and songs, such as his first cantata 'The Heirs of the White Mountains', 'The Hymn of the Bohemian Peasants' (4-part chorus with accompaniment), the set of duets (soprano and contralto) generally known by their German title, 'Klänge aus Mähren', and the Gipsy songs (Op. 55), also gave him scope for the expression of the racial spirit of his music in conjunction with poetry.

We have dwelt rather closely upon Dvořák for two reasons: in the first place because, in spite of the ready recognition which his music gained in England during his lifetime (he died in 1904), there has been very little attempt since his death to view his music as a whole or to spread the knowledge of more than a few favourite works. In the second place, he is the strongest example outside Russia of the growth of a national spirit in music during the latter part of the last century. Without any one strong literary or poetic influence to guide him, the spirit of revival in Bohemian life and cultivation at Prague inspired him, and though since his death no genius of equal power has appeared from the same quarter, Dvořák certainly established a definite style which was national in its origin but strong enough to appeal to all the world. That, it must always be remembered, is the aim of the national ideal in music. It is not

or should not be urged that the members of a nation should shut themselves up to talk their own dialect among themselves, but by developing their own way of thinking in music they are able to contribute something distinctive to the world's thought, and because music is ultimately a common language a nation's contribution in music can go forth more directly than a nation's thought expressed in poetry can do.

### RUSSIA'S POSITION IN ART

With our thoughts clear upon these principles we may turn to the history of Russian music in the last half of the nineteenth century. Here we are dealing not with a simple self-governing country such as Norway, nor yet with a conquered people like the people of Bohemia strenuously anxious to reassert their individuality in the face of an Imperial power which threatened to obliterate it, but with a great people united indeed under the government of the Tsar but containing a number of different and often conflicting interests and traditions. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century Russia had been very much isolated from the rest of Europe. It was Peter the Great—the Tsar whose name lives in the capital, Petrograd, which he founded—who insisted upon closer intercourse between his empire and the nations of Western Europe, and his policy had its effect upon the arts in general and music in particular by opening the way for the importation of foreign artists of every kind. Italian opera spread to Petrograd in the eighteenth century and took possession of the stage very much as it spread to Vienna and London. Composers such as Sarti and Paisiello wrote operas in Italian for the court of Catherine the Great just as Handel and Buononcini had written them for the courts of the first Georges in London, and this artistic domination from without lasted into the nineteenth century. One fashion succeeded another, and in the early part of the century French opera, Méhul and Cherubini, as well as the music of Vienna, came to Russia. But along with it native music persisted. After all fashionable life is a small part of any nation, a very small part of a great empire such as Russia. Peasant songs and ballads were the daily life

of millions of people who had never seen an opera. The Russian church, cut off from communion with western Christianity either catholic or protestant, preserved its own music and its own tradition of unaccompanied song unimpaired. All the time a great musical life was growing and strengthening amongst the Russian peoples.

The man who first gave to this life an unmistakable voice was MICHAEL IVANOVICH GLINKA. He was born in 1804, that is a year after Berlioz, and was brought up in the surroundings of a cultivated family who would no more have thought of music as a suitable career for a young man of birth and breeding than any English family of the upper classes would have thought of it at that date. At the age of twenty Glinka entered the Civil Service, and the enthusiasm which he had felt for music since he was a child found vent in his attending the opera and taking part as an amateur in all the music which came in his way. It is interesting to notice that the event which made him turn seriously to the question of his country's music was his leaving the country. He had composed a good deal of music, both for voice and instruments, though chiefly as a hobby, when in 1830 he started on a prolonged journey to Italy. His health was bad, a warmer climate was needed, but a passion to visit the land from which so much music had come urged him to the visit. When he was there he discovered for the first time that Italian opera was what it was because it sprang from the life of the Italian people. He realized that what was natural to them was affectation should he attempt to reproduce it. If he was to do anything worth doing he must be natural, and for him nature was expressed in the tunes which as a child he had heard the Russian bandsmen play at home.

#### GLINKA AND RUSSIAN OPERA

When he got back to Russia in 1834 he determined upon a great project, the composition of an opera in the Russian language with a story drawn from national history, such a story as would stimulate all his love of his country's legend, song, and

poetry. The project was actually fulfilled in the opera known as *A Life for the Tsar*, which was performed in the presence of the Tsar himself in November, 1836.

The occasion is as memorable a landmark in the history of Russian music as the production of *Der Freischütz* had been in German opera (see p. 18). There are in the music some things which remind one of Weber's style, a sign that Glinka's grasp was not yet quite certain, but it was sufficiently characteristic to show the possibility of a new ideal. Its nationality is no mere matter of quotation from folk-songs ; the evidence is found in Glinka's own melodies, rhythms, and harmonies. The overture is sufficiently often performed to give a practical example of Glinka's style to those who desire it, and a comparison with Weber's operatic overtures will show both the likeness and the difference.

Glinka followed up this with another opera, *Russlan and Liudmilla*, which takes its subject not from history but from legend. While the motive of *A Life for the Tsar* is directly patriotic, the story of a peasant who ventured his life to save that of his sovereign from treacherous enemies, *Russlan and Liudmilla*, the names are those of hero and heroine, appeals to that delight in the story of true love which never 'runs smooth' until the last scene or the last chapter, a delight which is so inherent in human nature that it is expressed in every phase of literature from the folk-tale to the modern novel and stage play. The evil genius who impedes the love of Russlan and Liudmilla is a magician who carries away the bride from the wedding feast, and it is worth while to notice, in view of what has occurred since in modern music, that Glinka describes the magician and his sinister art by the use of a descending scale in whole tones (see p. 156). That scale, obliterating the distinctions of key and the ordinary processes of melody founded on arrangements of tones and semitones, no doubt seemed to him an apt way of suggesting the defiance of nature which belongs to the arts of magic. It gives a good instance of Glinka's attempt to express character by exceptional musical devices.

There is a similar device in an opera, *The Stone Guest*, by

Dargomijsky (1813-69), who played a large part in the movement to found a distinctively Russian type of opera.<sup>1</sup> *The Stone Guest* is a version of the story of Don Juan which Mozart had made famous, and the use of the whole-toned scale in the episode of the statue accepting the Don's flippant invitation to supper is one instance among many of Dargomijsky's desire to lay emphasis upon the dramatic purport of the story. Dargomijsky in fact laid more stress upon the truthful expression of the drama by the use of unusual harmonies and a close attention to the verbal accent of his vocal parts than Glinka did, and it was he more than Glinka who began that intimate association between the Russian language and its music which we find later, particularly in the songs and operas of Moussorgsky.

In *The Stone Guest* Dargomijsky took as his text the poem by the great Russian poet Poushkin, and set it to music without cutting it up to make a conventional operatic *libretto*. It is impossible to over-estimate what the musicians of Russia owe to their national poet. His stories and poems form the basis of most of their finer works, and the widespread knowledge of him among the people at large has given to the composers an immediate point of contact with their audiences.

From what has been said it will be clear that the new Russian music founded upon folk-music, and furthered by poetry, first got its development most naturally in opera. Symphonic and chamber music were to come later. The latter, we have seen, always indicates an advanced state of musical cultivation, and Russia offers an example of this sequence of events as conspicuous as that shown in the story of France.

After the opera the next step was the fuller development of the orchestra. Glinka was instrumental in bringing Berlioz to Petrograd on his first visit of 1847 (see p. 65), and on that occasion a great deal of Berlioz's music was heard at concerts given in both Petrograd and Moscow. But Glinka died (1857) in the interval of twenty years which separated Berlioz's two visits, and when he came again (1867-8) a new generation of

<sup>1</sup> His opera, *The Roussalka* (Water nymphs), founded on Poushkin, is the most strongly national in its treatment of Russian folk-legend.

musicians, working in very different conditions from those in which Glinka had begun, was there to welcome him.

### THE RUSSIAN NATIONALISTS

About 1860 there came upon Russia an enthusiasm for education which affected music by the foundation of various institutions and academies, including the Conservatoire at Petrograd. Anton Rubinstein, whose fame all over Europe as a pianist became only second to that of Liszt, was its director, and under him education was pursued very much on the lines of the Conservatoires of Western Europe, such as those of Paris and Leipzig. The knowledge of music, not the development of a national form of music, was its aim, and the policy while it had certain advantages had corresponding disadvantages. Rubinstein was perfectly right in seeing that Russian music could not flourish in exclusion; foreign influences are not to be avoided, nor, as we have seen, is it desirable to avoid them, but the group of young composers who had inherited the ideals of Glinka and Dargomijsky had some fears lest they should be swamped by the adoption of habits and rules imported from without.

Mily Alexeivich Balakirev (born 1836) was the only one of this group, five in number, who from the beginning of his career was devoted to music. Living in the country, he was brought up upon the folk-music of Russia, and when quite a young man came to Petrograd in time to get into personal touch with Glinka. He gathered round him four others, César Cui (born 1835), an engineer, Modeste Moussorgsky (born 1839), an officer in the army, Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov (born 1844), a naval officer, and lastly, Alexander Borodin (born 1834), a scientist and lecturer on chemistry, and these, all of them men of remarkable musical talent, and at least two of them men of genius, were fired with a single-hearted enthusiasm by Balakirev's example. One more member of the group who was not a composer, but who aided the 'five' by his great literary ability and his critical insight, was Vladimir Vassileivich Stassov.

When Berlioz arrived on his second visit he was met and welcomed by the whole of this group. No doubt his reputation

as from his youth an enemy of Academies, made his welcome the warmer. Cui, whose position amongst them was stronger as a writer and propagandist than as a composer, wrote an enthusiastic article in the *Petrograd Gazette* on the 'Symphonie fantastique'. Berlioz's music was listened to and studied by them all, and his influence is very apparent in the instrumentation as well as to some extent in the form of Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic poems 'Sadko' and 'Antar', and the suite 'Scheherezade'.

Rimsky-Korsakov was the first among the Russians to produce a symphony, and was the most prolific composer of this group; he produced a large number of symphonic works for orchestra, a dozen operas, and some chamber music in the course of a long life, which ended in 1908. Borodin (died 1887), a much slower worker, whose instrumental works include two symphonies, several string quartets, and only one complete opera, *Prince Igor*, has probably left a stronger mark upon his country's music because of the direct purpose and strength of his works. Moussorgsky, with more genius than any of the others, accomplished less than either Rimsky-Korsakov or Borodin, partly because he excluded from his work more rigorously than any of them the influence of foreign music, and partly because when he left the army, poverty and ill health, the latter increased by the drug habit, preyed upon him, and he died in 1881, leaving a number of wonderfully imaginative songs, a little piano music, one great opera, *Boris Godounov*, finished, and several operas unfinished. It requires some knowledge of the Russian language to appreciate thoroughly the intimate connexion between poetry and music existing in Moussorgsky's songs and in *Boris Godounov*, but with the aid of translations some idea can be gained of his dramatic truthfulness and of his readiness to use any musical means which will express character.

So devoted was Moussorgsky to the expression of character by vocal phrase, simple rhythm, and striking harmony, that he troubled very little about orchestral colour. In the ~~orchestral~~ works of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Borodin we find the national ideal working itself out apart from the aid of poetry

and actual folk-song, but Tchaikovsky, who was never closely associated with them and who never consciously adopted the idea of a distinct national style as his first aim, did more than they immediately to impress the world at large with the value of Russian music.

#### TCHAIKOVSKY

PETER ILICH TCHAIKOVSKY (born May 7, 1840) came of a family which had shown no strong artistic leanings. His boyhood was passed in Petrograd, and he is one more example of the great composer who was first intended to be a lawyer. Like so many of his Russian contemporaries whom we have just discussed, his first interest in music was that of an amateur. He was twenty-one when he began to study music seriously, and two years later he gave up his post, that of a first-class clerk in the Ministry of Justice, in order to enter the new Conservatoire. Here he came strongly under the influence of Rubinstein, for whom he had an unbounded admiration, and under whose guidance he began to compose. He was not amongst the group of young composers who welcomed Berlioz on his visit in 1867. By that time he had migrated to Moscow, where another Conservatoire had been founded under the direction of Rubinstein's brother Nicholas. Tchaikovsky was engaged as a teacher of harmony, and for some time he lived in the same house with Nicholas Rubinstein, who was an able musician though less famous than his brother.

These circumstances are sufficient to show the distinct line which separated Tchaikovsky from his contemporaries who, half playfully, half in earnest, called themselves 'the invincible band'. The name itself was enough to arouse opposition in any one who was not included in it, and since 'the invincible band' opposed itself directly to the influence of Rubinstein it was natural that Rubinstein's admirer should hold aloof. In these two groups we get something of the same kind of antipathy which existed in Germany between Liszt and Wagner, on the one hand, and Brahms and Joachim on the other. Yet if Tchaikovsky was inclined to be inimical to the 'band', he was big enough to

appreciate the powers of some of its members. The fact that his fantasy overture 'Romeo and Juliet' is dedicated to Balakirev and that 'The Tempest' is dedicated to Stassov shows this.

Tchaikovsky's life was a difficult one. Fortunate in getting many of his compositions produced as they appeared, through the influence of Nicholas Rubinstein, yet neither his fame nor his fortune made rapid progress. The opera and the orchestra were from the first his chief means of expression, though amongst the list of his works fifty Russian folk-songs arranged for piano duets are worth noticing. Two symphonies and the fantasy overture 'Romeo and Juliet', and three operas were works of the period which culminated in 1875 with the piano concerto in B flat minor and the third symphony in D. The struggle of these years told seriously on his health and spirits, but in 1876 he was able to leave work for a time, to travel, and incidentally to be present at the first Festival at Bayreuth when *The Ring* was produced. Some of his works also travelled; 'Romeo and Juliet' was performed in Vienna and in Paris, though not with any great success.

The peculiarities of Tchaikovsky's temperament are stamped strongly upon his work. His vividness of imagination and openness to impressions show themselves in the daring designs of the symphonic poems 'The Tempest', 'Romeo and Juliet', and 'Francesca da Rimini'. It was an imagination which had in it the seeds of morbidity, and that quality grew upon him throughout his life. It was, to some extent at any rate, the warmth of his imagination which led him into his unfortunate marriage in 1877. There was a strain of morbidity in his failure to make the best of the situation which he had brought about. A complete breakdown and prolonged illness separate the works we have mentioned from those of his later life which, with a few exceptions, have become the most famous. After this illness, too, a change in his fortunes was brought about by the disinterested friendship of a woman, Madame von Meck, who, some years his senior and a widow with a large family, took so great an interest in Tchaikovsky's art that she made

him an allowance in order that he might be able to live where he liked, to travel when he would, and devote himself to composition. The curious fact about this friendship is that Tchaikovsky and his benefactress never met. They corresponded constantly, Tchaikovsky telling her about the progress of his works, his ideas for future ones, his hopes and his difficulties in carrying them out. The fourth symphony (F minor) was dedicated to her, and with it in the year 1878 appeared Tchaikovsky's best-known opera, *Eugen Onegin*, and the violin concerto.

The opportunity for travel brought to him by the generosity of Madame von Meck helped considerably in the spread of Tchaikovsky's music outside Russia; it also did something to break down the reserve, the dread of publicity, and the fear of associating with others, which were symptoms of his extreme sensitiveness of disposition. Reserve is the last quality which most people knowing Tchaikovsky's music would attribute to his character. There is a boldness and a blatancy in some of his musical ideas which make people of fastidious taste shrink from him. The swaggering tune with which the piano concerto in B flat minor opens shows no diffidence, and his habit of battering out the tunes of symphonies in great orchestral climaxes has earned him the reputation of a composer who wears his heart on his sleeve without fear or shame. But his art was his outlet of communication to the world, and it is notorious that none is so bold as the naturally reserved man who throws his reticence to the winds in a moment of confidence.

Italy, Germany, France, England, and America were all included in Tchaikovsky's travels. Some of them were undertaken for pleasure or health, and the Italian Capriccio for orchestra records impressions received on one of these visits to Italy. Others were undertaken to superintend performances of his symphonic works, but whenever he returned to Russia he would slip away into a quiet country life in which he could work with comparatively little disturbance. When his friend Nicholas Rubinstein died in 1881 he might have taken his place as the director of the Moscow Conservatoire, but he could not bring

himself to face the prospect of tying himself down to such work. In the following winter, spent in Rome, he wrote the fine elegiac trio for piano and strings in A minor in memory of his friend.

The 'eighties were much occupied with operas, including *Mazeppa*, which, like *Eugen Onegin*, is based upon a poem by Poushkin; the music to *Manfred*, orchestral suites, including 'Mozartiana', an orchestral arrangement of some dainty pieces by Mozart, and church music. In 1888 he undertook a big concert tour through Europe, which brought him to London for the first time, and in 1889, the fifth symphony being completed, he made another tour, partly for the purpose of introducing that work.

#### TCHAIKOVSKY AND BRAHMS

At Hamburg he met Brahms, who happened to be visiting his old home to receive at the hands of the Mayor honorary citizenship or, as we should say, 'the freedom of the city'. It was for this occasion that Brahms had written the 'Fest- und Gedenksprüche' (Festival and Memorial Sentences), a set of unaccompanied choruses to Biblical words beginning 'Our fathers trusted in Thee'. As a symphonic writer his work was completed; of his chamber works only the quintet for strings (Op. 111) and the works for the clarinet remained to be written. He made a point of hearing a rehearsal of Tchaikovsky's symphony and, meeting him at lunch afterwards, Tchaikovsky records that he gave his opinion of the work 'very frankly and simply'.

It is an appropriate moment, therefore, to place these two masters of the symphony side by side. Their mutual opinions of each other will help us to some extent, but it is surprising to find that the finale of Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony was the movement which Brahms liked least of the four. The reason usually given for the fact that neither cared very greatly for the music of the other is that they were men of different races, Teuton and Slav, opposed in temperament and artistic outlook. But the finale of Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony is in its general form, the character of its melodies, and their presentation very much nearer to the German style of writing than almost any-

thing else which he wrote. Some pages of the score remind one quite strongly of Brahms's own style; a positive likeness of theme exists between its principal subject (Ex. 28 a) and a prominent one in the finale of Brahms's second symphony (Ex. 28 b):

Ex. 28.



and the following development out of that theme is, in its buoyant rise and the emphasis laid on it by imitation between two instruments, more suggestive of Brahms than of Tchaikovsky.

Ex. 29.



We may suppose, then, that Brahms had sufficient insight to realize that the ways of men are necessarily different, and to feel that the moment of Tchaikovsky's approach to his own style was not the moment of his greatest strength. Tchaikovsky, attracted as he was by Brahms's personality, could not get further in appreciation of his music than an attitude of respect.

He found it vague and nebulous; complained that Brahms's 'musical ideas never speak to the point', and said 'from our Russian point of view Brahms lacks melodic invention'. What he seems to have meant by this was not so much that Brahms could not invent a melody as that, having once got it, he refused to press it home with the insistence that simpler natures need.

We have spoken of Tchaikovsky's way of battering at a climax, but it is always a melodic climax as well as one of tone. The slow movement of the fifth symphony, for example, rises to a tremendous climax shortly before the end, in which practically the whole orchestra is engaged in a *fortissimo* statement of a very simple tune, which is one of the principal themes in the movement. Brahms would have felt such a thing to be simply the reiteration of a platitude; to Tchaikovsky it was an intense outpouring of emotion.

#### TCHAIKOVSKY AND THE ORCHESTRA

Tchaikovsky's orchestral music is a curious blend of the two attitudes represented by Berlioz and Brahms. In his symphonic poems he set himself to illustrate a story as frankly as Berlioz himself did. The popular '1812' overture, depicting Napoleon's invasion of Russia and his repulse, is the most positively pictorial of them all, and, planned for open-air performance, it may well be compared with Berlioz's 'Symphonie funèbre'. His own remarks about it show that Tchaikovsky was conscious of the limitations of such music, and in his symphonies he rejected the idea of direct illustration. Yet some kind of programme is present in each of the later ones. We spoke of the story at the back of Brahms's works, and that, too, is true of Tchaikovsky's symphonies, and is made far more obvious in them. In none of the last three great ones can the story be said to remain in the background. In the fourth and fifth symphonies the striking motto themes which begin them and cut across the course of each movement give evidence of this. Brahms, too, we have seen, used such a motto in the third symphony, but the casual hearer may listen to that symphony several times before he realizes the fact. He cannot do that with Tchaikovsky.

In the case of the fourth symphony Tchaikovsky tried to put his story into words in a private letter to Mme von Meck in order that she might sympathize the more closely. But the effort was not very successful. He was able to do little more than describe the moods of the themes and movements, which are so clearly evident in the music itself that the verbal comment seems halting and unsatisfactory by comparison. He describes the motto theme as fate, 'a power which constantly hangs over us like the sword of Damocles'. Sorrow, hope, joy, dreams are all subject to its influence, and in the last movement, the principal theme of which is a Russian folk-song, he suggests that the only escape from fate is the unthinking life of a primitive people. In all this one sees the personal story of his own life, the strong impulses and vivid imaginativeness haunted by a morbid depression, from which he could never escape for long.

At the end of the letter he says: 'Naturally my words are not clear, nor are they exhaustive enough. Therein lies the peculiarity of instrumental music, that you cannot analyse its meaning.' These words are very significant. They lead up to the conclusion that there is no actual dividing line between programme music and absolute music. All good music has elements of both; it may be described in words, but it contains far more than words can convey; it may be analysed into its musical features, but it is the expression of something more than its outward features of sound.

The last of Tchaikovsky's symphonies, called 'The Pathetic', is the most distinctly autobiographical of them all. It is unnecessary to lay stress upon the gloom which pervades it from its opening theme to the long diminuendo of the slow movement which forms its *finale*. The very fact of ending a symphony with such a movement stamps it with its peculiar character. Three out of its four movements end *pianissimo*, and only the third, an original mixture of the scherzo and the march, contrasts in a sort of reckless hilarity with the pervading atmosphere of disillusionment. Even the second movement, famous for its gracious melody in five-beat time, is broken in upon by a middle

section, in which a drooping and sorrowful theme is played over a continuous pedal bass (that is the key-note constantly repeated). This device of a throbbing pedal adds poignancy to the last pages of the *finale*.

There was no sorrow of outward life to account for this increasing gloom. The last years of Tchaikovsky's life were marked by such success at home and abroad that he had strong inducements to happiness. All sorts of stories have been built round this symphony, but it certainly had nothing directly to do with his death. When he was planning it in 1892 he wrote hopefully to his brother about the work and his own future. Its composition, too, followed closely upon the production of one of the brightest of his works, the fairy ballet called 'Casse-noisette', well known in its subsequent form as an orchestral suite. Its general mood was in fact simply the outcome of that tendency to depression with which Tchaikovsky had been afflicted at intervals and with increasing force through his life. But it is the most forcible expression of a purely personal characteristic which the art of music can show. Its personal characteristics prevented its immediate success when it was heard at Petrograd in October, 1893, but once fully realized its acceptance by the public all over Europe, and especially in England, became excessively enthusiastic. Tchaikovsky, however, did not live to see the immense popularity of his 'Pathetic' symphony; he died on November 6, 1893.

Tchaikovsky was widely accepted, particularly in England, as a typically Russian composer, yet, as we have seen, he definitely put aside the conscious effort to evolve a national style. What he did was to evolve an exceedingly personal style, and because he was a Russian by birth, upbringing, and outlook upon life, his personal expression included many elements typical of his nation. Though he often drew upon Russian sources for his melody, sometimes using actual folk tunes or church tunes, for example in the slow movement of the string quartet in D, the *finale* of the fourth symphony, and the '1812' overture—elsewhere his melody without actual quotation suggests the rhythms and intervals of Russian folk-song—there are many other influences

of foreign origin almost equally strong. There is a suavity, one might almost call it a sentimentality, in Tchaikovsky's melody which none of the nationalist composers, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, or Borodin, would consent to cultivate. His love of Italy and her music may account for this to some extent, as his great admiration for Mozart certainly accounts for that dexterity of workmanship which gives charm to the smaller movements of his symphonies and suites. What he most shares with his contemporaries is simplicity of melodic outline combined with emphatic expression of his ideas, heightened by richness of orchestral colouring.

Tchaikovsky's persuasive way of expressing himself carried his music abroad at a time when the obvious crudities of Moussorgsky would not have been tolerated by any audience not previously interested in Russian ideals; and the coming of Tchaikovsky to Western Europe therefore prepared the way for the coming of others of his nation.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII

1. Play examples from the lyric pieces of Grieg and Dvořák's Slavonic Dances (piano duet) as contrasted national types.
2. Play Dumka and Furiant from Dvořák's piano pieces (Opp. 12, 35, and 42).
3. The overture to Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* should be played, and the miniature score (Donajowski) consulted.
4. Play Moussorgsky's 'Pictures from an Exhibition' as an example of his sense of character displaying itself in instrumental music.  
[Several of his songs have been well translated by Mrs. Newmarch.]
5. Passages from Tchaikovsky's symphonies and other orchestral works should be played.  
[The opportunities for hearing Tchaikovsky in concert performances are so numerous that much class-room illustration will hardly be necessary.]

#### BOOKS FOR REFERENCE

1. *Studies in Modern Music*, by W. H. Hadow. (Seeley.)  
[Contains an admirable essay on Dvořák, whose life and works have had very little literary discussion in England.]
2. *The Russian Opera*, by Rosa Newmarch. (Jenkins.)  
[The best English book on Glinka and the Nationalist group of composers.]
3. *The Life of Tchaikovsky*, by his brother, translated by Rosa Newmarch.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR OWN PART

WE have paid flying visits to many countries in the attempt to get a bird's-eye view of the most salient musical developments furthered by the most vivid musical minds of the nineteenth century. While we have scoured Europe from Paris to Moscow, and from Bergen to Vienna, and even crossed the Alps to Italy once or twice, we have scarcely touched on our own shores except to accompany the visits of state paid here by the great continental musicians. Weber and Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Wagner, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky, have all brought us back to England in their train. But is their story the whole story of music in England during the nineteenth century? Were our countrymen merely the applauding audience providing first performances for new works, honorary degrees at Oxford and Cambridge for those who would take them, and money to relieve Beethoven's necessities or pay the debts of the Bayreuth theatre? Certainly not. They did all these things, and most of them were things worth doing. We have no cause to be ashamed of the generous appreciation which our countrymen of the last century gave to so many of the musical masters of Europe. We need only be ashamed of those instances where that appreciation was withheld through stupidity or wilfulness. But to appreciate fully, a nation, like an individual, must have a part of its own to play, an active point of view in art which alone can give it a standard of criticism.

Those who have followed this sketch of the growth of music from the beginning will have realized that there was far more to say of English music in the seventeenth century than in the eighteenth. English church music both before and immediately after the Reformation, the Elizabethan madrigal, music for the

virginal and concerted strings of the same period, music in practically every form in the age of Purcell, occupied a large part of our study of the seventeenth century, and only with Handel began that procession of visitors which has lasted till to-day.

But the distinctively English forms of music were never quite lost, though after Purcell they contributed for a time little or nothing to the history of European art. English composers certainly lost their hold upon instrumental music, but they did not altogether relinquish any of the vocal forms which they had practised with such success up to Purcell's day. English vocal music can never fall to the ground as long as the English language with its infinite capacity for a measured beauty of expression remains. While the English Bible and the English Book of Common Prayer are in daily use there is a rhythmic basis in language for a distinctively English form of music. William Boyce (1710-79) could set such words as 'The sorrows of my heart are enlarged' with a justice of feeling for their measure which Handel could not touch, though the latter gave to texts from the English Bible the gorgeous raiment of his music in *Messiah*. Charles Stroud, a boy-composer of the early eighteenth century, could find music for the text, 'O that I had the wings of a dove; then would I flee away and be at rest,' beside whose grave earnestness Mendelssohn's pretty melody, written more than a hundred years later, seems to English ears a flippant impertinence. Our church music in fact, though it did not touch the noble level of a hundred years earlier, had a character of its own rooted in the language, and among its composers in the eighteenth century, Boyce, Nares, Battishill, and others, will be found a few works, anthems or canticles, which are undying.

In solo song, too, something survived which was characteristic of the English nature in its plain but wholesome melody. Thomas Arne (1710-78), who set Shakespeare's lyrics to music, or Shield (1748-1829), and Dibdin (1745-1810), who wrote patriotic songs for performance at the gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, can be recognized in a style quite distinct from

that of the Italian opera. They are Englishmen speaking to Englishmen without a foreign accent. Their music is the stuff of which a national opera is made, just as Weber made a German national opera in *Der Freischütz*, and Glinka a Russian one in *A Life for the Tsar*.

Arne and Dibdin in the eighteenth century, Bishop and Balfé in the nineteenth, were on the way to such an achievement if only they could have made their countrymen believe in them, and could have begun by wholly believing in themselves. Since the time of Purcell, English composers have constantly paralysed their efforts by breaking with their own past and starting upon fresh models found abroad. Sterndale Bennett, one of the most talented young men of the early nineteenth century, turned his back upon Dibdin and Shield and worshipped Mendelssohn (see pp. 45 and 82), and our young composers of to-day are too constantly doing the same by their immediate predecessors.

Nevertheless, we have a record in the nineteenth century in which we can take some pride. To think of the church music of S. S. Wesley (1810-76), the comic operas of Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), the choral music of Hubert Parry (born 1848), and the songs of Charles Villiers Stanford (born 1852), is to realize that our country's music has been anything but stagnant. It is more than that. We might legitimately here make a long list of composers whose work in every form, vocal and instrumental, has shown, and is still showing, an extraordinary amount of musical activity in the country. But these instances are purposely chosen from among the number because they represent more than merely the fact that English composers can be as active as their brothers in other countries. In each of these instances we have something which is quite distinct from the music of other nations because it is the musical counterpart of English language and literature.

#### CHURCH MUSIC

**SAMUEL SEBASTIAN WESLEY** was the son of Samuel Wesley, himself a composer of very great ability, and grand-nephew of the Rev. John Wesley, the great evangelist. **Samuel Wesley**,

the father, was among the first English musicians who grasped the spirit of J. S. Bach's music and had an overwhelming admiration for it. Most people of his generation had such an admiration for Handel that they could scarcely realize the greatness of his contemporary. In Samuel Wesley's setting of the Psalm 'In exitu Israel' (When Israel came out of Egypt), the best known to-day of his compositions for chorus unaccompanied, one sees clearly the influence of Bach's choral style. Samuel Sebastian therefore grew up with a wider knowledge of music than most of his countrymen possessed, and, like so many of the best church musicians of this country, he was educated as a chorister of the Chapel Royal (see Part I, pp. 76 and 77). When he was twenty-two he became organist of Hereford Cathedral (he conducted the Three Choirs Festival there in 1834), where he composed the anthem 'The Wilderness'. His life was spent in the practice of church music; from Hereford he went to Exeter Cathedral, and resigned that appointment in order to accept the organistship of Leeds parish church. There, under the vicar, Dr. Hook, Wesley was able to institute the parish church choral service, and his work marked the beginning of the revival of music in parish churches which was a distinctive feature of English church life in the nineteenth century. Later he held in turn two cathedral appointments, Winchester and Gloucester. At the latter he became for the second time a conductor of the Three Choirs Festival.

Throughout his life S. S. Wesley, in his compositions and in his executive work, was the champion of a type of church music which, while it preserved the dignity of the older cathedral music, was free from any archaic pose. He poured scorn upon those who thought that church music must necessarily be written in breves and semibreves; he laughed at the attempt to revive plainsong while that attempt was founded upon very imperfect knowledge of the characteristics of the old music. His melody and his harmony for voices with organ accompaniment could be daringly modern in its progressions; yet it always preserved the character of church music. If in some of his early anthems he was inclined to drop rather into the manner of oratorio (see the

bass aria of 'The Wilderness', 'Say to them that are of a fearful heart'), in his later works, especially in the two anthems for eight voices, 'Let us lift up our hearts' and 'O Lord, Thou art my God,' he cultivated the more massive style of contemplative church music.

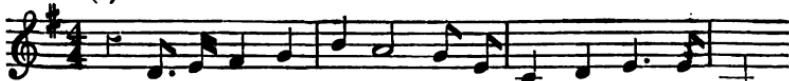
S. S. Wesley's music is essentially the product of the English Bible and the English Book of Common Prayer. His anthems trace their descent back to Orlando Gibbons (see Part I, p. 47), and his treatment of language in melody had the strongest influence upon Parry, an influence which shows itself even more strongly in Parry's later church cantatas written for the Three Choirs Festivals than in his earlier works.

Ex. 30.



The Lord hath been mind-ful of us and he shall bless us.

(b)



And the voice of weep-ing shall be heard there-in no more.

These two fragments—the one (a) from Wesley's anthem, 'Ascribe unto the Lord,' the other (b) from Parry's cantata, *Vox Clamantium*—give a suggestion of the way that influence has acted. It is not any direct likeness of phrase, though that may sometimes be found between the two, but a surrender of the melodic impulse to the rhythm of Biblical words; and that both composers have more strongly than any since the seventeenth century.

Parry's choral music, whether for the church or the concert-room, is always the outcome of the English language; he has ranged much more widely than Wesley, and the poetry of Milton in 'Blest Pair of Sirens' and 'L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso' has been as much his groundwork as the language of the Bible. To find how thoroughly his choral music is rooted in English traditions, place his setting of Pope's 'Ode on St. Cecilia's

Day' beside Purcell's setting of the ode by Brady, particularly the chorus 'Soul of the World' (No. 5) in the latter. You will not be likely to make the mistake of supposing that Parry's choral music reproduces Wesley or Purcell or Gibbons; it simply suggests the same growth of a style which we have found developed in so many instances throughout our study of musical history, and by this stage it is hardly necessary to point to the fact that originality is consistent with continuity.

#### COMIC OPERA

To turn from the church music of Wesley to the comic operas of Sullivan may seem a somewhat violent change of standpoint; they have, however, this in common—their dependence upon language. Sullivan produced a unique and typically English form of opera as a result of working hand in hand with a unique and typically English humorist, W. S. Gilbert. It is worth while to notice that Sullivan's first essay at comic opera was made in conjunction with F. C. Burnand, editor of *Punch*, who wrote the libretto of *Box and Cox*, founded on the well-known play by Madison Morton. We all recognize in *Punch*, whether the *Punch* of Burnand and Leech or of Owen Seaman and Bernard Partridge, a kind of humour which belongs essentially to our own country; it is often inexplicable to foreigners, but no Englishman misses its point. The humour of the operas which Gilbert and Sullivan wrote together was very much of the same kind. Often based upon quips of language, skilful rhymes, allusions to current events such as the aesthetic movement satirized in *Patience*, the words went straight home to their audiences, and Sullivan's art as an illustrator of the words in sound was the precise counterpart of Gilbert's in verse. The song, 'To sit in solemn silence in a deep, dark dock,' from *The Mikado* shows the completeness of their unanimity, which is like a good joke in *Punch*, one which would be incomplete did the words or the picture stand alone.

#### THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-SONG

In another direction Stanford's songs show that same closeness between music and poetry. However, there is a further

element to be taken into account here, and that is the revival of folk-song which began in the nineteenth century, and is still going on in this country. Various causes made the more cultivated people of Great Britain realize the existence of Irish folk-song before they were aware of English folk-song. One was that the Irish people, regarding themselves as a conquered nation, clung tenaciously to whatever in art represented their own nation as opposed to the invading Saxon; while the English people, regarding themselves as a conquering nation, were inclined to be careless of their own artistic possessions, since they could acquire those of other nations with so much ease. Stanford saturated himself in the folk-song of Ireland, which was the country of his birth, though his family belonged to the English settlement in Ireland; and the countless arrangements of Irish folk-songs which he has made have played their part in moulding his own style of song composition very much as the Russian folk-song arrangements of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov moulded their melodic types. The supreme beauty of Stanford's numerous songs is not so much the feeling for the measure of English language as the capacity for discovering a musical thought which chimes perfectly with the poetic thought of each lyric which he undertakes to set. And this capacity, which is a part of his individual genius, he has sharpened to a fine point by his constant contact with the exquisite imaginings of Irish folk-song.

You may test the truth of this by hearing Stanford's settings of 'The Songs from the Glens of Antrim', the cycles called 'Cushendall' and 'The Fire of Turf', and many other specimens of his work. Both the vocal and instrumental parts have some peculiar flavour which, while recognizable as the special tone of voice of their composer, also seems to spring right from the heart of the poetry.

We have picked out four examples of composers of the nineteenth century, two of whom happily are still living and working, and have pointed to particular aspects of their work which show them undeniably as the products of their own country. Wesley's whole career was summed up in his English church music; he

left practically nothing else, but it is sufficient to give him his place as a great composer. The other three, Sullivan, Stanford, and Parry, have all produced a great quantity of music outside the forms of comic opera, song, and choral cantata which we have taken to represent them respectively. We are not going to attempt an examination of their work, or an outline of the many musical forces, many of them of the highest interest and fraught with big possibilities, which are at work to-day. What we set out to find was the directions in which this country maintained an independent line of musical development in the last century, and these four aspects of these four composers supply us the evidence needed.

We have already quoted the German saying, 'Ein englischer Componist—kein Componist' (p. 82), and suggested that the appearance of Sterndale Bennett with his fine piano concerto in F minor on the platform of the Leipzig Gewandhaus refuted it. It was Schumann who heard his neighbour murmur this remark before Bennett played, and who forced him to withdraw it afterwards. Certainly Schumann was right in exacting the withdrawal. Bennett was not to be dismissed as 'no composer'. In his concertos, his overtures for orchestra, his piano pieces, and his songs he proved himself to be a composer of a delicate imagination and a refined sense of beauty. But if the remark had been put in the form in which it is more often quoted, 'English music is no music,' Schumann might have had more difficulty in disposing of it on Bennett's account. Certainly Bennett was a composer of fine music, but it is hard to find any quality in his music which is the outcome of English tradition, language, or mode of thought. Probably his kinship with the music of Mendelssohn commended him most satisfactorily to the audience of the Gewandhaus. His music had in fact little or no suggestion of a national way of thought (see p. 159); it brought no new contribution of strength and beauty from its composer's country.

This criticism cannot be applied to Bennett's contemporary, Wesley, or to the three later men; at any rate, in the special aspects of their work which we have named.

But when we look at the instrumental music of our countrymen it is much less easy to point decisively to any continuous growth of a national style. The composers of the nineteenth century had no direct link with their country's past history in instrumental music. A century and a half had passed between the death of Purcell and the time when composers such as Parry and Stanford began their work. And during that time this country had lived almost entirely on foreign instrumental music. The problem was by no means so simple for our composers as it was for Grieg or Dvořák or the Russians, because the primitive types of folk-music in England had been largely smothered and forgotten by the more cultivated classes of society. Glinka had little difficulty in recalling to his mind his country's folk-music, because it was associated intimately with his childish days ; but the folk-songs of England had been long relegated to country inns and cottage homes, and it was not until a campaign was instituted to re-discover them quite late in the last century that ordinarily musical people had any notion of their real characteristics of melody. Whether they can now ever be sufficiently revived to become the basis of a national form of music, comparable to the Russian school for example, remains still an open question ; but if it is done, it will be the work of the century to come.

We may find individual examples of pure instrumental music in the nineteenth century which appeal to us as having some peculiarly national qualities, such as Parry's suite for strings known as 'Lady Radnor's Suite', and parts of his symphony in C called 'The English' Symphony, and some of Elgar's work, particularly the 'Cockaigne' overture and the 'Enigma' variations. Stanford and Mackenzie, with their heritage of Irish and Scottish folk-music, had something more definite to build upon, and used their opportunities well in their various rhapsodies on folk melodies. But it must be admitted that such things are tentative in comparison with the other national types which we studied in the last chapter.

It seems as though the possession of a national voice in instrumental music may have to be reached by means far

different from those by which other countries reached it in the last century. The musicians of this country cannot shut themselves up to the exclusive contemplation of their own inheritance. Such an exclusiveness would produce artificiality, because the national life of their country is no longer self-contained. In art, as in material fact, nature and circumstance have made them members of a world-wide civilization. In this the conditions are the reverse of those which prevailed in Russia or the other countries which we discussed in the last chapter. Where English music is associated with language it naturally is stamped by the character of the language. Where it is independent of language the hall-mark of national character is less clearly impressed upon it. Such things as the symphonies of Elgar, and still more strongly the 'London' symphony of Vaughan Williams, give a suggestion of the kind of evolution which may result in the distinct national voice of the future.

But remembering the warning of Wagner's mistake the word future may well give us pause. We will not indulge in speculation. We can see, however, that the last century, and especially the last part of it, brought a great revival of musical enterprise to this country ; that it gave us some works which we can recognize as springing from our soil, others which are clearly the product of new thought built upon our intercourse with the outer world. Their manifold variety and their many signs of vitality give us a great hope.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VIII

1. This chapter is necessarily the faintest suggestion of what ought to occupy a separate course of study. Any attempt to illustrate it should begin with a course of songs which may be drawn from the following books :

*Minstrelsy of England, 2 vols.* (Augener.)

[Contains a large number of the songs of Shield, Dibdin, and others.]

*Songs of Britain*, edited by Martin Shaw. (Boosey.)

[Contains many fine traditional songs in modern arrangements.]

*The National Song Book*, edited by C. V. Stanford. (Boosey.)

[Contains traditional songs of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, arranged for school use.]

*Songs of Old Ireland*, edited by C. V. Stanford. (Boosey.)

[A beautiful collection of Irish melodies with modern words by A. P. Graves.]

*Folk-songs from Somerset*, edited by Cecil Sharp. (Novello.)

[Several volumes of English folk-song recently collected.]

2. Modern song may be studied in specimens by Stanford (Stainer & Bell), Parry's *English Lyrics* (Novello), *Shakespeare Songs* by R. Quilter (Boosey) and Walford Davies (Novello), Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* (Avison ed., Novello).

3. The choral style of Wesley and Parry should be compared.

[The works of both are obtainable from Novello.]

4. Songs, quartets, and other concerted numbers should be chosen from Sullivan's comic operas (Chappell).

#### BOOKS FOR REFERENCE

1. *A History of English Music*, by Ernest Walker (Oxford University Press).

2. *English Music in the Nineteenth Century*, by J. A. Fuller-Maitland.

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